

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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Price 7 Cents

THE HAUNTED HUT; OR, THE GHOSTS OF ROCKY GULCH.

AND OTHER STORIES



Ben at the door—Harry near the sofa, upon which lay the unconscious girl—it was the same with both—both were dumb, with terror unspeakable. For the second figure was as transparent as the first.

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THERE is practically the same amount of reading matter in this weekly that the larger size contained. We have merely condensed the type and make up to conserve paper.

THE PUBLISHER.

THE HAUNTED HUT OR, THE GHOSTS OF ROCKY GULCH

By ALLYN DRAPER.

CHAPTER I.—McElfattrick and Luck.

If you want to see a crowded thoroughfare, try Clark street, Chicago, say from Randolph to Jackson, at going-home time, from five o'clock to seven, or thereabout. Out of a thousand small manufacturing establishments located over the stores on Randolph, Washington, Madison, Monroe and other streets, a constant stream of people come pouring. Tired, worn folks mostly, with shabby clothes and empty lunch baskets. This kind don't bother the horse cars or cable roads much, but hurry on foot, by bridges or tunnel to the west and north sides. Half-past six o'clock on a certain afternoon in October, some ten years ago, a tall, dark, and rather good-looking chap of eighteen or so descended the stairs of a big building on Clark street nearly opposite the City Hall, and passing under the illuminated sign which bore the single word, "Billiards," joined the hurrying crowd.

"Hello, Harry! Where are you bound, old man?"

Out of the crowd a familiar voice sounded, and the familiar form of Harry Edwards' particular friend and chum suddenly separated itself.

"Hello, Harry! What the deuce are you doing here?" he repeated, catching his friend by the arm and keeping pace by his side.

"Ben Jones! Well, I'm mighty glad to see you."

"Same here, betcher life!" replied Ben, who, though about Harry's own age, resembled him in no other particular, being short and fat, with red hair and freckled face.

"Where'd you drop from?" demanded Harry, as they walked along.

"From nowhere; been up in Barney's billiard room ever since three. Oh, I'm on the dead loaf, betcher life. How's it with you?"

"Same here, Ben. I've got a job, though."

"You have! Good!"

"Measuring sidewalks for Street, Walker and Doolittle."

"Oh, go on! Quit your fooling, Harry. Have you really caught on to anything?"

"Not a thing, Ben. This makes the sixth week since McElfattrick Co.'s elevator failed up and knocked us out. My money's all gone, my landlady has given me warning. I'm ashamed to go and write to my uncle in New York for help, and as I haven't got another relation that I know of, I'm in a deuce of a fix, you see."

"Well, it's the same here, Harry, only my landlady hasn't run the bill in on me yet, and I haven't even got one uncle to fall back on——"

"Oh, 'tain't so bad for you, Ben. You belong in Chicago. You must have some friends who will help you."

"Hain't got one. I'm too fat—nobody makes friend with me."

"Nonsense!"

"Betcher life it's so. Say, Hal!"

"What is it?"

"How much yer got?"

"Two dollars."

"Gee! That's one more than I've got. I was going to suggest that we go around to Mrs. Andrews and have one good feed, but I guess we'd better save it for breakfast. Come home with me and we'll stick close to the room to-night—that won't cost nothing. To-morrow may bring better luck."

And the friends sauntered on to the Northside by way of the Clark street bridge. Ben's room was on the top story of a tall house on Erie street. With a view of avoiding the landlady, the boys having let themselves in with Ben's latchkey, started up the dark stairs on tip-toe; but it was no use—they ran straight into Mrs. Starbuck in the hall.

"Law sakes, Mr. Jones! How you scart me!" panted the good woman, who was portly enough to be Ben's mother. "Who's this with you? Mr. Edwards? Thet's good. There's a telegram for him up on to your bureau, an' I give the boy a quarter, which I'll thank you for now, as I'm short of change."

"Who in the world do you s'pose sent it, Ben?" wondered Harry, a moment later.

He stood by Ben's bureau with the despatch in his hand.

"Open it and see, why don't yer?"

"Thunder!" cried Harry, as he tore open the envelope. "It's from old man McElfattrick."

"What!"

"Fact. Listen to what he says: 'Come at once. Important business.' Ben, what shall I do?"

"Do? Why, go, of course. Most likely he's heard of a job for you. Gee! I only wisht it was me. Go on, old man. I wish you joy. McElfattrick and luck! I'll wait right here on pins and needles till you come back."

Such were the circumstances which sent Harry Edwards hurrying over on to La Salle avenue to

the house of Mr. McElpatrick, the ruined grain merchant, on that October night.

"Edwards, I'm pleased to see you," said Mr. McElpatrick, taking his former clerk into a handsomely furnished library. "Of course you got my dispatch?"

"Yes, sir. That's why I'm here."

"Exactly. Sit down. I've got something to propose."

Harry dropped into a chair.

"Are you doing anything yet?" asked Mr. McElpatrick, in his usual pompous tones.

"No, sir."

"I'm glad of it. I want you."

"Are you going to start up again, sir?"

"No, there is no immediate prospect of my starting. What I want you for is something entirely different. Edwards, do you remember the Western Queen Gold Mine?"

"The one out in Idaho that you told me you sunk \$220,000 in?"

"Exactly. Edwards, I want you to go out there for me. I want you to start to-morrow morning. I will pay all your expenses. By the way, is Jones employed?"

"No, sir."

"Better take him along with you, then. It will be better than for you to go alone. Do you suppose he will go?"

"I know he will, sir."

"And you?"

"Oh, I shall be only too happy. But I thought the mine was all closed up?"

"So it is. Listen, and I'll tell you what I want. Edwards, that mine is not the worthless property it has been represented to be. On the contrary, it is exceedingly rich in gold."

"But I thought——"

"No matter what you thought. I'm telling you what is. The fact is, Edwards, I have just received a letter from parties at Black Buttes, Idaho, the nearest town to the mine, which is located in Rocky Gulch, some forty miles distant, informing me of the true history of that failure."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes. Fact is, Edwards, the mine panned out big, so big that the superintendent lost his head. The country was filled with desperate fellows who threatened his life, so he gathered up all the gold that had been taken out at the time, about \$100,000, I believe, and, loading it on mules, started for Silver City. To make a long story short, Edwards, the man was never heard of again."

"And what became of him, sir?"

"We supposed that he had stolen the gold, and made off with it, and I still think that such was his intention," replied Mr. McElpatrick. "Until yesterday we had no clue to the mystery. The stockholders became discouraged, and would advance no more money, and so the mine was abandoned."

"And now you've heard something?"

"I have positive information that our superintendent hid the gold somewhere in the gulch. Now go, and when you get to Black Buttes, ask for a man named Old Jess Weeks and give him this letter."

When Harry left Mr. McElpatrick's house his head was in a whirl.

There were circumstances in the past life of this boy which made him think hard just then.

So deeply engaged was he that he failed to notice a slim, stylish-looking man with a black beard, who ran down Mr. McElpatrick's stoop immediately behind him. Fact is, Harry thought—if he thought of it at all—that all the danger there might be in his undertaking lay in the wilds of Idaho. He paid no heed to the quick footsteps which followed his—never even heard them. Therefore, when the black-bearded man came suddenly behind him and dealt him what was meant to be a crushing blow on the back of the head, the boy was taken by surprise. Not entirely, though. He knew what was about to happen just in time to dodge enough to break the force of the blow. Instantly he turned on his antagonist, striking straight out from the shoulder. Either the man feared that he might be recognized, or was a coward. Harry struck him three times, and he never retaliated once. With his hat pulled down over his eyes so that the boy could not clearly distinguish his features, he made one leap down off the board walk into a vacant lot, and darted away at the top of his speed. Harry did not follow. He was too anxious to get back to Ben for that. He took the fellow for an ordinary tough, bent on robbery, and laughed at the thought of how little he would have got had he succeeded in his evil designs.

"Well?" cried Ben, as soon as he entered the room, "did you bring McElpatrick and luck, old man?"

"I didn't bring McElpatrick, that's sure," laughed Harry. "But I guess I've brought luck—Ben, you and I are off for Idaho with all expenses paid to-morrow by the first train."

CHAPTER II.—The Dream.

"Hal, Hal! For Heaven's sake, what ails you? Wake up, wake up!"

Rocks, mountains towering with snow-capped peaks up among the clouds of a dun gray sky.

"What's the row, Ben?"

"Gosh! You're the one to tell it. What are you hollerin' about?"

"Didn't know I was. Ben, I've been dreaming the strangest things."

Ben Jones took up the rifle which leaned against the ledge and started in the direction of two horses browsing upon the sagebrush a short distance away.

"One would suppose you were dreaming of your future mother-in-law from the way you hollered," he grumbled. "Say, we want to be moving, for as true as you live, there's a snowstorm coming. If we don't get somewhere before it comes we'll never find ourselves. Hal, I'm blamed hungry. I tell you this getting lost is no joke."

Lost! Were these two boys who had left Chicago a few days previous, in such excellent spirits, actually lost? That was exactly it. As long as they stuck to the railroad, all went well. In fact, there had been no trouble of any kind until they started from Silver City for Black Buttes alone and on horseback. It was just about a day's ride between the two places under ordinary circumstances. Harry Edwards and Ben Jones were out three days and two nights from Silver City now. They were in a part of Idaho scarcely explored at that time, save by a few mining prospectors. Somehow they had lost the trail,

and for the last forty-eight hours, with provisions all gone, had been wandering about half starved themselves, and their horses in the same condition, without the faintest idea which way to turn. So much for over-confidence. It was Harry's own fault. He positively would not have a guide. Their present desperate fix was the result.

"Confound it, Hal, we've lost a good hour," grumbled Ben, as they reached the horses. "I was in hopes we'd strike something before dark."

"Can't help it, old fellow," replied Harry, who was looking very grave. "You know I kept guard all last night, and I was really too much fagged to go any further."

"Well, I hope you feel better."

"I do. I'm all right. What was the matter, anyhow, Ben?"

"Nothing was the matter, only you were yelling out in your sleep about something."

"I was dreaming."

"What about?"

"It was the strangest thing, Ben."

"Tell it, tell it!"

"Why, I dreamt that I woke up and we rode on along the base of this mountain until all of a sudden we came to a big gully—a canyon, you understand?"

"Yes, I know. Well?"

"There was a stream of water rushing down this canyon, and all of a sudden I saw lying on the bank a dead body—a man."

"Thunder!"

"Hold on; then I saw another dead man, then a woman, then another man. All of a sudden I looked up and there was a girl—a perfect little darling, Ben, with flaxen hair and blue eyes."

"Cheese it; never mind the description of the girl! Get to the point."

"Why, the point is that I saw the girl suddenly throw herself into the water. 'She is going to kill herself,' I thought, and I jumped in and grabbed her. I tried the best I knew to get her over to the rocks, but it was no use. All at once as we went floating down the stream, I holding her tight, you bet, I heard a fall ahead. Then I hollered for you, Ben, and——"

"And woke up?"

"That's it."

"Fiddlesticks! What nonsense! We must get a move on us, for, by George, it's beginning to snow now. We want to push on to the end of this butte. I believe we'll come to a trail of some kind then."

They now rode forward as rapidly as their jaded horses were able to carry them, but came to no trail.

"Hark! What's that?" cried Harry suddenly.

"Water—must be a river near."

"And that! That's no water, Ben."

What the boys heard now sounded for all the world like a woman's despairing cry. Just at that moment they came to the end of the perpendicular wall on the right. Before them now lay an enormous collection of loose boulders, tumbled helter-skelter into the canyon, among which ran a mountain torrent rushing down the slope in another direction. For ten minutes or more the boys rode alongside this stream, slowly ascending.

"Say, Ben," exclaimed Harry suddenly, "this beats the Dutch!"

"What?"

"Why, this is the very place I dreamed about."

"Bother! I wish you'd dream of some way to get out of our fix."

"I tell you, Ben—holy smoke! What's that?"

Harry's horse suddenly shied, almost throwing its rider over into the rushing torrent. Just at the same moment Ben gave a yell, for his horse did the same.

"Look! Look there, Hal!" he cried, jerking on the animal's bridle.

"What? Where?"

"There! Oh, yonder! You blasted fool, if you don't stand still, I'll break your jaw!"

The last was to the horse, of course. Then Harry saw what before he had not seen. To his horror, there upon the ground, half covered with snow, lay the dead body of a man.

"My dream, Ben! My dream come true! What can it mean?"

"There's another," retorted Ben, grimly.

He was right. A little further on lay the body of an elderly woman, evidently a German, also dead. Further still was another man, and presently the boys, who pressed forward, came to a broken-down wagon of the "prairie schooner" pattern.

"Great Scott! my dream is all coming out!" exclaimed Harry, more and more amazed.

"Did you dream of the wagon?"

"No, but——"

"Look! Look, Hal!"

Ben, whose eyes had been wandering about in every direction, suddenly pointed off toward a great boulder which stood beside the stream, at some little distance away.

"My stars, here comes the rest of it!" cried Harry, leaping from his horse and flinging the bridle to Ben.

That was all he said. The rest was action. He dashed up the rise like mad. Reaching the stream, he laid down his rifle, pulled off his coat, flung down his hat, and plunged in.

"Harry! Harry! Be careful! Do be careful!" shouted Ben, urging the horses forward.

For Ben had seen it all. When he first looked there was a young girl standing bareheaded upon the top of the boulder, gazing down into the water. Suddenly, with a wild cry, she raised her hands above her head and flung herself down into the rushing waters beneath. When Ben, a second later, came in full view of the stream, there was Harry with his arms around the girl, struggling bravely against a fearful current to gain the bank. To Ben there seemed something strangely weird in this fulfillment of Harry's remarkable dream.

CHAPTER III.—The Hut on the Rocks.

"Ben! Oh, Ben!"

It was Harry Edwards calling. His voice, echoing and re-echoing back from the rocks around. Ben Jones had jumped off his horse, and, leaving both animals to look out for themselves, seized Harry's coat, hat, and rifle, and rushed along the bank of the mountain torrent, barely able to keep pace with his struggling friend.

"Here, take her, Ben!" gasped Harry, once he was inside the line of the stone.

It was a distressing position for Ben. He was

so fat, and wasn't used to girls, especially dead ones. Certainly the one he held in his arms now looked as if she were dead. Her eyes were closed, her dripping forehead the color of marble. Apparently about sixteen, she was certainly very beautiful—that is, to one admiring the German type of beauty, which some do not. Shaking himself like some great water dog, Harry Edwards scrambled up on the rock and stood by Ben's side.

"Is she dead?" Ben asked.

"Wasn't a minute ago. I felt her heart beat."

"She looks as if she was now."

"And so she may be for all I can tell. I know I'll be in a few moments if I can't get these clothes off. They're freezing stiff."

"Great heavens! What shall we do?" groaned Ben. "I can't hold this girl. Betcher life she's no fairy. Here, put on your coat and hat."

"You'll have to put her down," answered Harry, "and—why, Ben! Look there!"

Ben turned his eyes up in the direction Harry's pointing finger indicated. To his surprise he saw what he had not seen before, that high up on the ledge on the south wall of the canyon stood a sizable log hut, in the window of which burned a cheerful light.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Harry. "We'll save this poor girl's life yet. Here, I'll help you, Ben, and we'll carry her up together. Strange neither of us saw that ranch before."

It was strange—very strange, for on their way up the gulch they must have passed it. There were stranger things than this connected with that lone hut on the rocks, though, as they were destined soon to learn. Leading up to the hut was a flight of steps rudely cut out of the solid ledge. With no little effort Ben and Harry carried the girl to the top and paused, all out of breath, before the door.

"Hello! - Hello! Inside the hut!" yelled Ben.

No answer.

"Here, I'll hold her. You thump on the door," said Hal.

"Ye gods! For this relief much thanks!" muttered Ben, as Harry lifted the burden from his shoulders. "She's awfully pretty, poor thing, but she weighs more'n a pound."

Bang! Bang! Bang! Evidently Ben meant business when he undertook to knock on a door. But nothing came of it. In and around the hut utter silence still reigned.

"There must be someone in there," cried Harry, "for there's the light."

"Hello!" he yelled. "Are you all drunk or dead inside there? Hello! open the door, or I'll kick it in!"

Suddenly the door opened. Here was the first surprise. Not a soul was visible. The door seemed to have opened itself, or to have been opened by invisible hands. The two boys now found themselves looking into a sizable apartment, which occupied fully half the hut. It was the appearance this room presented that furnished the second surprise. It was more like a Fifth avenue parlor than a log hut in the wilds of Idaho. Harry and Ben could scarcely believe their eyes. The floor was covered with an expensive Axminster carpet but little worn, heavy chenille curtains hung at the window; there was a sofa in one corner, an open piano in the other; suspended from the ceiling above an oak table

with legs beautifully carved was a large hanging lamp, with a fancy shade, lighted, too, and showing the astonished visitors numerous and beautiful pictures upon the walls. There was also a comfortable fire blazing upon the open hearth. All this and more, and yet not a soul to be seen.

"This is a thundering strange place!" cried Ben. "What's it mean?"

"Don't know and don't care," replied Harry. "You just help me carry this girl in, will you?"

"All right! All right."

Ben took hold again, and between them they carried the unfortunate creature to the sofa and laid her down before the fire. Ben closed the door, shutting out the whirling snowflakes—they were on the other side of the canyon now, and consequently got the full force of the storm. Meanwhile Harry had pushed on into the other room. It was a bed chamber as superbly furnished as any millionaire's, but as deserted as the room without.

"Don't care! We must stay here if we mean to save this girl," exclaimed Harry. "Here, Ben, take hold with me, and let's see if we can't rub some life into her."

"Say, Hal, is this the girl you dreamed about?"

"The very one! I'll take my affidavit."

"It's awfully strange. Say, I order go back and see about the horses, for—holly ginger! What's this?"

Suddenly, and without even a warning flicker, the lamp above Ben's head went out, leaving the room illuminated only by the feeble flames from the hearth.

"What did that?" breathed Harry.

"Must've been the wind."

"Got a match—mine are all wet."

"Yes. Hold on, I'll light her up—Hal! Hal! For Heaven's sake, look over there!"

"Hush! I see! Keep cool!" whispered Harry, in a voice scarcely less startled.

His hair seemed to rise all over his head. Strange tingling sensations seized him—his blood seemed turned to ice. As for Ben, he gave one dismal cry and made a bolt for the door. And no wonder. There beside the great chimney, over which a deer's head hung, a man had suddenly appeared, rising apparently up out of the floor. He was tall and elderly. His clothes were of black broadcloth cut in full dress style, long gray hair hung about his shoulders, while a beard of snowy whiteness concealed his features and extended almost to his waist. He did not speak, but simply pointed toward the hearth, and shook his head with a sad expression. Horror redoubled now seized Harry. He perceived that he could look right through the figure and see a picture on the wall beyond. Suddenly, from out of the hearth—right out of the fire itself, it seemed—a second form rose. It was a younger man with black hair and beard, whose eyes seemed to blaze with an insane light. Both boys were as though paralyzed now. Ben at the door, Harry beside the sofa upon which lay the unconscious girl—it was the same with both—both were dumb with terror unspeakable. For the second figure was as transparent as the first—they could see the fire right through him in the most unaccountable way. Gliding toward the old man, who stood with folded arms and head bowed as though in prayer, he seemed to draw a sword—a long, thin rapier, and, moving back, plunged

it into the old man's breast. But there was no cry—no sound of any sort. The younger man now drew out the sword, for his companion had never moved, and, waving it above his head, started with one quick dash toward Harry, who could not move an inch, for some power invisible seemed to hold him chained.

CHAPTER IV.—Dealings with the Dead.

"It's gone!"

"Don't be too sure."

"Can't you see it's gone?"

"I can't see it now, but it might come back again."

"Well, by gracious! While it's gone I'm going to make the most of it, and look around for something in the way of grub."

It was Harry Edwards who had reached this sensible conclusion, so you see he was not so very badly frightened by the ghosts. He and Ben Jones stood by the great open fire-place, upon which a heap of blazing logs roared and crackled. On the sofa lay the girl whom the boys had rescued from the mountain stream. She was still unconscious, but it was the unconsciousness of slumber. Ben made this discovery shortly after they got the fire going. Matters had quieted down inside the hut considerably.

"Let's see what is upstairs," suggested Harry, turning to the ladder which led to the loft overhead. But they didn't find out. The trap-door at the top of the ladder proved to be immovable. It was just as Harry gained the floor again that he was amazed to see the old man standing near the door, looking at them in the full light. It was the same figure—there was no mistaking it. Only for an instant did it remain visible, however; then, vanishing, there was nothing but the door. No wonder that Ben was skeptical after about their being left to enjoy in peace the shelter they had so unexpectedly stumbled upon, for to see a ghost in the full light was quite as terrifying as to see it in the dark.

"Don't care. They shan't drive me out in the storm, that's flat," repeated Harry. "This place is altogether too comfortable to leave."

Half an hour passed and nothing of an unusual nature had transpired. The boys began to think that the ghost had given it up. Meanwhile mystery had been added to mystery, for the mere fact of this handsomely furnished establishment existing in those desolate wilds was the greatest mystery of all. Whoever the owners of the hut might be, it looked as though they had but just left it, for in addition to what they had already seen, the boys discovered in a closet a plentiful supply of cooked provisions which they did not hesitate to appropriate to their own use. There was a roasted haunch of cold venison, some boiled bears' meat, a partridge pie, a basket of uncooked potatoes and several bottles of excellent wine. By the time they had punished their provisions, Ben and Harry felt that they were equal to a whole regiment of ghosts, and began seriously to wonder if they had actually seen what had been so plain to both. Meanwhile the girl continued to breathe regularly, and was so evidently in a peaceful sleep that there seemed no excuse for disturbing her. Lighting an excellent cigar apiece—they had discovered a full box in the closet—the boys drew their chairs nearer the fire and sat

down to discuss the situation—neither thought of such a thing as sleep.

"By thunder, Ben, this beats the deck!" exclaimed Harry. "Were there ever so many adventures crowded into a single night?"

"Are you sure that they are over yet?" answered Ben.

"It's my opinion that we'll see more of it before we get through."

"Ghosts?"

"Of course."

"I don't know what to make of it. Of course I don't believe in ghosts."

"Of course not. No more do I, but—Great Scott! Harry, they're coming again!"

Suddenly the light had been extinguished, and nothing but the glow of the fire, which was now dying down, remained.

"Did you blow out that light, Ben?" breathed Harry, starting to his feet.

"Not much! You know I didn't."

"But I felt a draft of cold air go past my face."

"So did I, an—Phew! Look up there!"

Ben was pointing to the ceiling over near the trap-door. There, peering down upon them, was the head and face of an old man, with a long white beard. It was precisely the same face they had seen before. Breathlessly the boys watched it. The head seemed to hang suspended from the ceiling, gradually coming lower and lower. As it descended, the boys followed it. First, the shoulders, then the arms, until all of a sudden the thing dropped and there again stood the phantom on its feet. Thin and vapory in appearance, it moved toward the frightened boys with outstretched arms, this time making no attempt to draw the sword which hung at its side. Step by step it advanced, until within perhaps four feet of them, when it raised, raised one hand, and pointed toward the door.

"Go!"

The voice did not seem to come from the lips of the apparition. On the contrary, it seemed to the excited imagination of the boys just as though it sprang from every part of the room at once. Then as the word was spoken the figure vanished, leaving Harry and Ben in the uncertain light alone. Harry was the first to recover himself. Drawing a match from his little pocket-safe, he sprang to the table and lit the lamp once more.

"By the living Caesar, I'll know what all this means!" he exclaimed, "but leave this place, I won't."

He caught up the lamp and searched every corner of the room, but in vain.

"It's no use," muttered Ben, "you won't find anything. Look here, old man, I don't like this. Explain it any way you will, it breaks me all up. I move we light out."

"But the girl?"

"There's the rub. We can't leave her, and I'll be blowed if I want to carry her, not to say—Hello! She's waking up."

It was so. Right in the midst of Ben's remarks the girl suddenly raised up off the sofa and uttered one frightened cry.

"Wha—what is this? Where am I?" she gasped, staring at the boys confusedly.

"Speak to her, Ben—I can't," whispered Harry.

"Speak to her yourself. You're the ladies' man. I never was worth a cent talking to girls."

Harry stepped up to the sofa.

"It's all right, miss. You're among friends. I hope you are feeling better, and——"

"Friends! I have no friends! They're all dead."

"There, there! Don't excite yourself. We are your friends. Try and think; don't you remember jumping into the stream?"

"Yes, yes; I was mad!"

"Better forget it, then. Can you tell me your name?"

"Lena Dietz is my name," moaned the girl. "Oh, why did you not let me die?"

"Well, I'm not anxious to die myself, and I take it no one else is. Even if you have had trouble— By gracious, Ben, what's that?"

"Sounds very much as though some one were knocking at the door!" exclaimed Ben.

Nor was there any mistake about it, either.

"Rap, rap, rap! Rap, rap, rap!" came sounding upon the outside.

"Who on earth can it be?" breathed Harry. "Great Scott, hear the wind howl! I tell you what it is, Ben, I don't feel much like opening the door."

Just then the rapping came again and louder.

"Open the door, open the door!" shouted a voice outside. "Are you going to leave a fellow here to perish in the storm?"

"Of course we'll have to open it," cried Ben. "Why, I wouldn't leave a dog outside there a night like this."

Now Ben had forgotten all about the ghosts, apparently, but Harry could think of nothing else. Removing the bar which secured the door, Ben threw it wide open, a shrill scream from the girl sounding through the hut at the same time. Nor need their excitement be wondered at, for the instant the door was opened, in walked a horse as white as the snow behind it, upon which sat that same shadowy phantom, which they had seen three times before. It was an appalling sight. As Harry stood staring at it the blood seemed turned to ice in his veins. First he could only see the horse, white, thin and vapory. Noiselessly it seemed to enter the form of the old man gathering on its back as it passed the threshold. For a few steps it advanced across the floor, and then—presto!—it had vanished like a puff of smoke, and there was nothing but the whirling snowflakes streaming through the door. What could it all mean? To Harry it seemed like dealings with the dead.

CHAPTER V.—The Friendly Mr. Dunn.

"Hello! Hello inside there! Hello!" Once more some one was thumping vigorously on the door of the haunted hut.

"Open the door, Ben!" called Harry Edwards from the big fireplace, where he was crouched on his knees in the act of pulling a roasted potato out of the hot cinders.

"Don't s'pose there's such a thing as ghosts in daylight," muttered Ben, "but I don't know but what I'd just as soon meet one as the owner of this hut."

It was morning, and the storm had passed. When Ben opened the door a cheery "Good morning!" rang out upon the air. Certainly there was nothing very ghostly about the young man who stood outside. He was a slim, smooth-faced

fellow of little more than Ben's own age, apparently. He wore two overcoats, both old and shabby, big leather boots, into which his trousers were tucked, and one of those rough cloth caps with big ear pieces, which one seldom sees outside of the West, while upon his back he carried a pack enveloped in oil-silk, supported by a broad strap fastened in some peculiar way over his shoulder and breast. Altogether, he looked like a peddler, certainly like anything but a ghost.

"Good morning, gentlemen. Good morning, miss!" he said, in a free-and-easy fashion, pushing his way uninvited into the hut. "Fine morning after the storm? Ah, breakfast! That's good, for I'm most confoundedly hungry; by your leave I'll stop and take a bite. I thought I'd find it up here."

Throwing aside his pack, he drew up to the fire and began warming his hands, making himself thoroughly at home.

"By George, that's a cheeky fellow," Harry's glance at Ben seemed to say.

Meanwhile Lena kept right on setting the table. The poor girl was too deeply absorbed in her own sorrow to pay much attention to anything else.

"This place does not belong to us," said Harry, after he had recovered himself. "We only came in here last night to get shelter from the storm."

"Oh, I know! Wish I had a place like it; but let me introduce myself. I am Jerry Dunn, commercial agent from Kansas City. Make me acquainted with the lady, please."

Harry did the honors, and Mr. Dunn proceeded to shake hands all around.

By this time the potatoes were done and Lena had the table ready, and they sat down to breakfast.

"Don't like him," Harry found opportunity to whisper to Ben.

"Me neither," was the answer. "Say, Harry, betcher life he's a fraud."

Still there was nothing for it but to be civil to the fellow, who rattled away at a thunderous rate. Indeed, it would have been difficult to help it, for the drummer from Kansas City was good humor itself.

"I'm on my way to Black Buttes to take orders," he said. "I knock about the Territories and do a rushing trade."

"How far is it to the Buttes?"

"Oh, not more than five miles. By thunder, you've got a good breakfast here. I'll trouble you for another slice of that meat. I have a boat below here. Better come along."

"Shall we go, Ben?" whispered Harry, after breakfast was over and the boys withdrew to a corner to discuss the proposition of the friendly Mr. Dunn.

"I don't see why not."

"I don't like the fellow for a cent."

"Me neither, but what can he do to hurt us, even if he wanted to? We've got our rifles, and that's more than he has. The sooner we get up to Black Buttes the better. I say, let's go."

There was a good deal more said about it, but in the end it was agreed that Mr. Dunn's proposition should be accepted. In fact, there was really no other course.

"Is it far to the boat?" asked Harry.

"Only down at the foot of the rise here," was the answer.

It seemed a long tramp through the snow, though, when they came to take it. Harry had all he could do to persuade Lena to accompany them. The afflicted girl declared that she could never leave her father, whose body lay buried so deep under the snow, that but for a broken wagon which they found on their way to the creek, even Lena herself could not have located the spot.

"Here we are!" exclaimed the drummer, when at last they found themselves on the bank of the rushing stream, at a point somewhat below the rock near which Harry's adventures of the previous night had taken place. "Help me to launch her, boys, and we'll start in no time. Ought to be at the Buttes by ten o'clock."

It was a first-rate boat, though rather small for four. Mr. Dunn explained that it belonged to him and told how he kept it in a cave ready to use when he had occasion. In fact, he told a most astonishing yarn about it.

"Don't believe a word of it," Harry whispered. "Ben, I don't trust this fellow for a cent."

"Me neither," answered Ben. "I move we shake him."

"That wouldn't pay. We want to get to Black Buttes some way or other, and the quickest way I can see is to go along with him."

Ben had no answer for this, and the boys now fell to and helped Mr. Dunn drag the boat down to the stream. They had discovered it standing on end against a ledge, just as the drummer had stated. Certainly there was room for a man to get behind it and be sheltered from the storm. The trampled condition of the snow, moreover, seemed to indicate that in this respect, at least, Mr. Dunn had spoken the truth. While these preparations were being made the girl Lena took her station on a flat rock which the wind had swept bare. It was no child's task to hold the boat in position, for the stream ran with amazing swiftness, and right here seemed to be very deep.

"Say, you two fellows, get in and get seated," said Mr. Dunn. "I'll hold the boat while you help the girl in. Never mind your guns, I can throw them in afterward."

"What's the matter with throwing them in first?" said Harry, and he did it.

Ben followed, seating himself in the stern.

"Now, then, miss!" called the drummer, who was holding the boat. As he spoke Harry stepped in and was about to turn around to lend Lena a helping hand, when the friendly Mr. Dunn suddenly gave him a violent push which sent him sprawling on top of Ben.

"Day, day, boys! Pleasant voyage to the Buttes!" he shouted, giving the boat a shove which sent it flying out into the rushing current of the mountain stream.

CHAPTER VI.—A Phantom Cave.

"Great Scott!"

Harry Edwards was trying to get himself straightened out without upsetting the boat.

"Look out! Look out!" roared Ben. "You'll have her over in a second, Hal!"

But Harry had no notion of upsetting the boat if he could help it. Shooting on through the utter darkness, any instant might see them dashed to their death.

"It's a sink, that's what it is," said Harry, "and the dear knows where it comes out."

"Might never come out. Some of them sinks don't," answered Ben, who had been reading up about the far West.

"What fools we were to believe in that fellow," said Harry, bitterly. "It is the last time I'll ever take stock in a stranger. Say, Ben, haven't you got any matches?"

"Nary a match. Used the last I had on the fire up at the hut."

"And I haven't one about me. Ben, old man, I'm afraid it's all up with us."

"Why, as far as that goes, I don't give up till I have to," answered Ben. "We escaped them ghosts last night, and we may get out of this snap unless— By George, Hal, we must have run into some sort of an underground lake! What's become of the noise?"

Suddenly the rushing sound had ceased. The boat slowing down little by little, came gradually to nearly a complete standstill, as far as the boys could determine. Harry stretched out his arms to their widest extent, but could not touch the walls of rock against which they had so narrowly missed being dashed a few moments before.

"It's a sink with a vengeance, Ben. If we only had one match between us now."

"Hold on, Hal, I can fix it!"

"How?"

"Let's fire our rifles."

"What good will that do?"

"Why, the flash will give us light."

"Only for a minute."

"I know that, but in that minute we may be able to see where we are."

"O. K. if you say so. Get ready, and when I say three, let drive."

"Ready?" called Harry a moment later.

"All ready."

"Here goes, then! One, two, three!"

Bang! bang!

Never before, probably, were two rifle shots fired with such amazing results. First came the flash, and by its light the boys perceived that the boat in which they sat was indeed floating upon an underground lake. There were rocks behind them, rocks above them and on one side, but right ahead and on the left a placid sheet of water was seen to stretch as far as the eye could reach. But this was nothing. What followed roused the boys to the highest pitch of amazement. Instead of vanishing instantly, as it should have done, the flash of the two rifles seemed to remain—to grow brighter and brighter. It was wholly inexplicable, but, nevertheless, it was so. Brighter and brighter still grew the light until it filled the entire cavern. The boys could distinguish all their surroundings now as plainly as if the place had been illuminated by a hundred electric lamps.

"Great heavens! What can it mean?" gasped Harry. "More ghosts coming, Ben, or what?"

"Look! Look!" cried Ben, suddenly. "For heaven's sake, Hal, what's that?"

Nor was Harry's excitement when he looked in the direction which Ben pointed one bit the less. There, right ahead of them, gliding over the surface of the water, apparently, was a human skeleton standing erect. Following it came the skeleton frame of some huge animal as big as a small house, having long, curling tusks, and a perfectly enormous skull. Behind this was another and

still another. Five the boys counted altogether, and then came a second human skeleton bringing up the rear. Slowly and with a gliding motion they seemed to pass over the water before the astonished boys, when—

Presto! The light was obliterated like magic, and all was dense darkness once more.

A rifle shot sounded right behind them and then the sound of oars.

"We are being followed," groaned Ben.

"Hold on, we have struck a current," said Harry, and then something struck the boat and he was thrown into the water.

"Hal, Hal!" shouted Ben, who heard the splash.

There was no answer. Meanwhile the boat flew on with the swift current. Ben seized a rifle and fired it. With the flash he saw the boat was shooting through a narrow passage bound—where?

CHAPTER VII.—Ben Walks into a Trap.

"Hello, there! Hey! I say! Hello!"

"Waal, what yer want?" demanded the long-legged, big-footed, white-hatted fellow who stood leaning over the rail of the bridge at Black Buttes, Idaho, looking down into the creek.

There was a boat down below him, and in the boat sat a boy of about the size of our friend, Ben Jones, holding on to the slippery rocks with both hands.

"Throw me a line, can't you," sang out Ben.

"Waal, you jest hold on a minute longer, will yer? I'll git yer a line if yer will," said the man on the bridge.

"All right. Be pretty blessed quick about it. I'll hold on if I can."

"I won't be gone two shakes," called the man, and away he went.

On his right just beyond the bridge was a saloon—the Elks head Shades, the sign read, for there was an elk's head with big antlers above the door. The man burst in, and, glancing narrowly about him, taking in the features of the different loungers about the place apparently, gave the bartender a wink, and slipped in at the edge of the bar. The bartender was at his side in a moment.

"What's up, Jack?" he whispered.

"One on 'em's through!" answered the man, who was known about Black Buttes by the name of Wyoming Jack.

"No! Yer don't mean it!"

"Fact!"

"Whar is he, Jack?"

"In ther boat a-holdin' on to the rocks fer dear life."

"Gosh all snakes! Whar's t'other?"

"Hanged if I know. Say, if yer wuz me would yer let him go over ther falls?"

"Not at all! What would yer do that fer? Obey orders ef yer break owners, is my motto."

"Thet's so. Ther orders wuz to bring him in hyar."

"Do it, then."

"Will you let ther leftenant know?"

"Cert."

"All right. Give us a rope, an' I'll do the reskyin' act—that is, if he hasn't gone over ther falls a'ready, an' I wouldn't wonder a mite ef he had."

But Mr. Wyoming Jack was wrong in his speculations. Ben Jones was what you might call a "stayer." As long as there was a leg to stand on or a point to be grasped, he was bound to hold on like grim death. And it was Ben. How he came there is not much of a story, either. Briefly told the creek had just carried them into Black Buttes. To stop the boat in the underground passage was an impossibility, so letting it have its own way, because he had to. Ben found himself carried out of the tunnel into a deep canyon, the walls of which rose higher almost than he could see. Gradually they grew lower and lower, but continued perfectly perpendicular, until all at once Ben became aware of the fact that he was approaching civilization at last. On the banks above him various buildings began to appear. Here was a shaft house, there another, here a few cabins, there a range of sheds for storing ore. Presently the bridge; on either side of the stream were brick blocks and detached frame buildings. Ben saw that he was coming into a town.

"Black Buttes, by thunder!" he muttered, heaving a deep sigh of relief. "Oh, if poor Hal were only here now?"

Then he caught at the ledge and yelled to Wyoming Jack on the bridge, and there Jack found him still "holding the fort," when at last he came back with the rope.

"Hello, down thar!" he shouted, leaning over the bridge.

"I'm here, but I can't hold on much longer!" answered Ben. "Be quick, or I'm a goner, sure."

"Thar ye go! Ketch it!"

Down came the rope, rattling into the boat. Ben let go and grabbed it just in time. Of course, the boat swung around, going more than half under the bridge.

"Letter go," roared Jack. "Keep holt of ther rope. You'll find steps jest beyont ther bridge whar ye kin land."

It proved so. In a moment Ben had made fast to a little float, the man paying out the rope as the boat advanced.

"All right now?" he shouted.

"All right!"

"Let go the rope, then."

Ben did so, and abandoning the boat, climbed up the steps, meeting Mr. Woming Jack on the bridge.

"Say, I'm awfully obliged to you," he said, dejectedly. "I'd have been on the falls only for you."

"Don't mention it, pard. Whar'd yer come from?"

"Back in the mountains," answered Ben, evasively.

"What's yer name?" asked Jack inquisitively, as they stood together on the bridge.

"Jones."

"Sho! I knowed a feller named Jones onct up to Spokane Falls—wonder if he's any relation of your'n?"

"Guess not. I don't know anybody in this part of the country. Say, can you tell me where I can find the mayor of this town?"

"Say, Billy, is the squire inside?" asked Jack, as they entered the saloon shortly after.

"Yes, he's in there," replied the bartender shortly. "Want to see him?"

"Yas; or, ruther, this gent does."

"You'd better go right in then."

"Come on," said the man, motioning to Ben.

Still all seemed straight enough. There was certainly no reason why Ben should doubt it. He accordingly followed the man through a room behind the saloon, and thence into another and smaller room behind that, where two men sat at a table smoking cigars.

"Thar's the mayor!" said Jack, pointing to the tallest of the two men, a well-dressed individual with a heavy black beard.

"Squire," he added, "this hyar young gent has jest come down ther crib in a boat without oars. He wants to see you on private bizness, so I jest brung him hyar."

The man looked up quickly. It struck Ben as a peculiar way of introducing him, but then people are not particular about introductions in the Far West.

"Did you want to see me, young man?" asked the mayor, rising.

"Yes. I'd like to speak a word to you in private, please," replied Ben, who was beginning to feel a little nervous under the steady glare of the mayor's eye.

"All right. Just step this way."

He led Ben to one corner of the room, close to a window which overlooked the creek. Mr. Wyoming Jack and the mayor's companion meanwhile remained by the table with their eyes fixed upon the pair. A strange silence seemed to have come over them. They acted for all the world as though they were expecting something to happen, and in a moment something did. During that moment Ben and the mayor continued to talk in low tones. Instead of watching their faces, Wyoming Jack and his companion kept their eyes on the mayor's feet. Presently the right foot began moving cautiously toward the bare board. Wyoming Jack and the other fellow were breathless now. Suddenly a startled cry rang out through the room.

"My heavens! The floor is breaking!"

It was Ben who exclaimed. The cry was piteous, despairing. A trap door had suddenly opened at his feet and poor Ben was falling.

"Help! Hel——"

He vanished, and the trap door noiselessly shot back into place.

"That settles it, boys," breathed the mayor, stepping back, with his face deathly pale.

"If that don't satisfy the boys I don't know what will. Come, let's have a drink!"

Meanwhile what about Harry? The boy was not drowned. After keeping afloat by the aid of hands and feet for a few minutes, a bright light shot up in the cavern. At the same time his hand came in contact with something and he held on. It proved to be the leg of a huge creature larger than an elephant—or the skeleton of one, rather. At the same time he saw, coming towards him a boat with four men in it, one in the bow holding a reflecting lantern. By its rays Harry saw a number of the huge skeletons.

The boat was now nearing Harry and he was terrified.

"What shall I do?" said the boy in an undertone.

"Take hold of my hand and I'll pull you up," whispered a voice above him. At the same time a hand was extended between the ribs of the huge creature and within Harry's reach.

CHAPTER VIII.—Ben Finds Jess Weeks.

"Well, by time! Here I am, alive."

It was Ben Jones exclaiming, and his tone was one of intense surprise at the mere fact of finding himself in position to exclaim at all. Ben was hanging to a rope, clinging desperately by his half-frozen hands. Below, the sound of rushing water was uncomfortably audible, and all around was as black as night. Now, to be alive is certainly something for one to congratulate himself on. Especially after one has just passed through the hands of a gang of murderers like Mr. Wyoming Jack, the mayor of Black Buttes, and his friends. When Ben found himself falling through the trap-door he certainly never expected to be so favored as this; but the rope came in his way and he clutched at it, scarcely knowing how or why; and here he was, holding on for dear life still, trying to work his way hand over hand to the point from which the rope started, wherever that might be. It was a hard task; the rope cut his hands cruelly; it seemed utterly impossible to keep hold any longer, when suddenly the boy's feet went grinding against something hard, and he fell all in a heap upon the wet and slippery rock, weak from sheer nervousness, now that the great danger had passed. A few moments of semi-unconsciousness, a brief space of indecision, and Ben was ready for business again, and as bright and chipper as though nothing had occurred.

"By thunder, they meant to murder me, the scoundrels!" he muttered, scrambling to his feet. "That man was no more mayor of Black Buttes than I am. Glad I didn't tell him about Mr. McElfatrick sending us out here. I was just going to do it when——"

Here a frightful noise suddenly cut short Ben's train of reflection. Shrieks, groans, the clank of iron, and the swash of water seemed all combined while the rocks upon which he stood seemed to fairly tremble with the din.

"Heavens and earth! What's that?" gasped Ben, for it was as if the end of the world had come.

Still the noise continued, though somewhat changed. It had assumed the regularity of machinery. First clank! clank! then a terrible swishing and swashing, as though several reservoirs of water had been poured at Ben's feet, then clank! clank! again, and so on.

"That's a mill wheel," determined the boy, after a moment of attentive listening. "That's what it is—a mill wheel—and they think they are grinding me, which I'm proud and happy to say ain't the case."

While the noise continued Ben did not dare to move, not knowing into what danger one false step might throw him. At last it ceased, however, and save the sound of rushing waters all was still.

"They've dropped me into a mill race, and just by blind luck I ain't dead," muttered Ben. "By George, they must be a desperate lot of fellows! Must have been all put up beforehand, too, though how they knew I was coming beats me."

But what to do was now the question. There was not a ray of light, and the situation was decidedly unpleasant.

"I begin to know how it seems to be blind," muttered Ben, as he started along the rocks feel-

ing his way with the greatest care before venturing to put his foot down. Step by step, little by little, he worked along over the wet and slippery rocks. Where was he going? That was the puzzle.

"Betcher life this is tough," murmured the boy at last. "If a fellow only knew where he was going to fetch up, it would be different—but—Phew! What's this?"

"Hold up your hands! Hold 'em up, you young catamount, or I'll be hornswiggled ef I don't bore yer full of holes!"

Suddenly a light had illuminated the darkness, and there stood a man with a rifle aimed straight at Ben's head. The light fell upon black, ragged rocks, divided by a rushing stream, with damp, frost-covered timbers overhead. Behind the man with the rifle was another, holding a dark lantern, the light striking full upon the boy's face. Ben's hands went up in a hurry.

"Don't you shoot! Don't you shoot!" he shouted, aghast.

"I've a blame good mind ter, then!" answered the owner of the rifle, a short, thick-set, sawed-off fellow, dressed in a shaggy, white coat, and wearing a big cowboy's hat. "I've the blamedest kind of a mind to blow you into pickeral bait! What you doing deown hyar? Say?"

"Well, I s'pose I couldn't help being chucked here?" answered Ben.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Put that gun down and I'll tell you."

"Put down nothing! I've been laying for you. This thing's got to be put a stop to. This hyer town don't grow fer a cent, and all on account of sich fellers as you—come on, boys, come on. I've caught one on 'em. Come on!"

Ben did some quick thinking then for over the rocks he now saw half a dozen men come scrambling. They were all armed and had a most determined not to say desperate look. In a moment Ben found himself surrounded and completely at the mercy of these men.

"Who is he?"

"Whar'd ye ketch him?"

"Any more about?"

Everybody had something to say and all hands were speaking at once. In the midst of the excited crowd stood Ben Jones with his hands stretched up to their utmost capacity, feeling anything but comfortable, to say the least.

"Shut up, you fellers, till I find out who he is," cried the short man in the white coat. "Say, young feller, speak up now—who be ye, an' what brung ye hyar?"

"I told you I was dropped here."

"Don't give us that again. Search him, Bill," one of the party began going through Ben's pockets, but the short man kept right on. "Go through him from head to heels; now then, young feller, what's your name?"

"Ben Jones."

Ben saw that the utmost coolness could only serve him now.

"You don't belong to the Buttes, I know."

"No."

"Whar ye from?"

"Chicago."

"What brung ye hyar?"

"I told you twice, but you won't believe me."

"Do you mean to say that you ain't one of the rang?"

"I mean to say that I was dropped into this place through a trap-door."

"What!"

"It's just as I tell you. I was in a saloon near the bridge—the Elkshead, I believe they call it—I was talking with Squire Stafford, the mayor of your town, and——"

"Squire Stafford! Impossible!" broke in a dozen voices.

"Anyhow, that's the way he was introduced to me, the scoundrel! If you don't believe me ask him; he opened the trap and sent me down."

"Great gosh! I mistrusted as much!" exclaimed the short man, lowering his rifle at last.

"He hain't got a thing erbout him in the way of arms," reported Bill at this moment.

"What kinder lookin' feller was he?" asked the man.

"A tall man with a heavy black beard."

"By thunder, boys, that's the mayor!" cried the man, in evident amazement. "We're on the right track at last!"

"What did yer come to Black Buttes fer, anyhow?" he asked of Ben.

"I came on private business."

"You'll have to tell it then. Our bizness is public, bet yer sweet life."

Should he tell? Ben was too undecided as to the true character of his captors to know what to do.

"Speak up! Speak up!" ordered the man. "It'll be the wuss fer yer if you don't. What brung ye to ther Buttes—let's hev it quick."

"I came from Mr. McElpatrick, of Chicago," blurted Ben, desperately. "I came to see a man called Jess Weeks."

"Jess Weeks?"

"Yes."

"The deuce you say."

"It's a fact."

"What do you want of him?"

"Well, I ain't going to tell you."

"Yes, yer be."

"What makes you think so?"

"I've a blame good reason fer thinkin' so."

"I'd like to know it."

"Yer would, hey? Waal, yer shall. Looker hyar, young feller, guess yer don't know who yer talkin' to. Thar's only one Jess Weeks in Black Buttes, an' I'm ther man!"

CHAPTER IX.—A Mysterious Man.

"Catch hold!"

"I can't reach."

"Try—you've got to do it."

"No, no! I can't."

"Stretch yourself out; there, tha's more like it. Now, then, help yourself a bit and up you go."

It was a horrible sensation to feel that bony hand clutching his own, but for Harry Edwards there was no help for it. The boat had come to a standstill between the mastodon's legs, and nothing but a lucky accident prevented Harry from being seen in his roost among the skeleton ribs. The light went out—that was what happened. Why it happened Harry did not then know. Out it went, though, and suddenly, too, and then in the darkness down came the skeleton hand, and, after a brief parley, the boy's own

hand was locked in it, and he was drawn upward, helping himself with the other, and with his legs, too, until the next he knew he had found a resting place broad enough to sit in comparative ease.

"Dod rot that lantern, what ther blazes ails 'is?" someone could be heard howling below.

"Guess likely ther ile's all give out," someone else replied.

"Then it's your fault. Ye orter filled it."

"Tain't my place to fill lamps."

"It's your place to see that they're in workin' order. Blast these fellers what's allus argyfyin' 'bout what's ther bizness, I say."

"Oh, you dry up."

"Won't nuther."

"Hold up! Hold up! Stop ver quarilin'!" broke in a different voice. "There's only one thing ter do, an' that's to go arter ile."

"S'pose ther boy is up in the skelington?"

"Waal, 'tain't likely; but ef so be he is an' hears us, let him look out for himself—that's all I've gotter say."

Whereupon the boat was heard moving off from between the legs of the mastodon's skeleton. The voices ceased, the flash of the oars grew fainter and fainter, until at last it had died away altogether, and all grew still. Meanwhile, Harry's heart was beating like a trip-hammer. There was something beside him—something grim, ghostly and horrible, as far as he knew anything about it. He had caught one glimpse of it, which was quite enough, and since then he had felt it. Twice he had put out his hand, and each time had touched bones. Harry could not understand the thing at all.

"They're gone now."

The thing beside him was speaking.

"They will be sure to return before long. We must go, too."

Certainly the living skeleton spoke very much like a man.

"Go—where—where to?"

"Will you trust yourself to me, boy?"

"I'd like to see you first."

It was all Harry could do to keep cool.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the voice in a blood-curdling fashion. "He wants to see me! Oh, yes! I'm a fine sight. Boy, do you know who I am?"

"That's what I'd like to know."

"I'm the great avenger—I am Death, the Destroyer! Behold!"

A match snapped, and the light of a tiny dark lantern fell upon a strange object indeed. It was a man and yet a skeleton, but Harry saw at a glance how his fears had led him astray. In a sense the man before him was a skeleton; never before had Harry seen a human being so thin; beside which he was tall with large head, snow-white hair, and great hollow eyes. He was dressed in a tight-fitting suit of black, which exhibited his emaciation to its fullest extent, and all over his body, from head to foot, were hung bones, which rattled together as he moved.

"Merciful heavens!" gasped Harry, drawing back.

"Ha, ha! ain't I a beauty? So you are afraid of old Death?"

"No, I am not afraid."

"Don't lie! You are."

"I am not afraid of you. I don't know who

you are, nor why you dress that way, but I'm very much obliged to you for helping me out the way you did."

"Who are you, boy?"

"My name is Edwards."

"Edwards? My stars!"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing!"

"But you seemed surprised."

"If I did I am so no longer. I see you ought to be named Edwards. Great heavens, this is fate!"

"Speak! Speak out! exclaimed Harry, as the full glare of the light was thrown upon him, but the living skeleton had other ideas.

"Not a word will you get out of me, Harry Edwards," he breathed, in a peculiar hissing voice.

"I know you—Mr. McElfrick sent you here."

Harry was more than amazed.

"You seem to know a great deal about my business, sir," he stammered.

"I do."

"Who are you? Won't you tell?"

"Do not ask. You must leave this place. You have enemies—they will kill you; if you would fulfill your mission you must go."

"But how can I go—there is no boat?"

"I ask you again, will you trust yourself to me?"

"Yes—I shall have to."

"Good! You will not regret it. Now we will climb down, and you will see what you shall see—come!"

It was a ticklish job to climb down to the breast-bone of the huge skeleton; worse in some respects than coming up. Harry's strange companion went first, and when Harry himself got to the breast-bone he found to his surprise that the man had vanished, but in a moment he heard his voice calling from below, and saw the light flash up.

"Hello!"

"Hello!"

"Are you all right?"

"Yes, yes! What shall I do?"

"Climb down the big bone of the mastodon—the left foreleg—you will find what you want there."

Then the light flashed and Harry, looking down, saw a small canoe alongside the leg in question. Naturally he wondered how it got there, for certainly it was not there a moment before.

"Come, come! Why don't you come?" called the voice.

"I'm coming," replied Harry, as he crawled over to a point where the opening between the ribs was wide enough to permit him to slip through.

The light struck full upon the leg and the boat, though oddly enough he could not seem to see the man. Trusting to luck, Harry wound his legs around that huge bone and went sliding down. In an instant he was in the boat, but to his utter amazement found himself alone. The little lantern was underneath the bow seat, but the mysterious living skeleton was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER X.—Harry in Trouble Again.

"Hello! Hello!"

No answer; nothing but the echo, which threw Harry's words back in his teeth.

"Hello! Hello!"

Harry shouted again and still again, but the result was just the same. At last he gave it up, and picking up the lantern, turned his attention to the canoe, where fresh surprises awaited him. There was a gun lying in the bottom of the canoe, a sort of leather knapsack, which proved to contain bread, cheese, crackers, cold roast meat and other eatables; a flask with a little liquor, probably whisky, a pair of blankets, and a few other things. How had all this come about in a moment? It did not seem possible that the canoe could have been there from the first, and not seen by the men in the boat. After speculating and calling till he was tired, Harry untied the line which held the canoe fast to the mastodon's leg, and taking up the paddle, moved away, too much puzzled to have one clear idea left in his head. He gave a parting shout as he pushed off, but got no answer.

"By gracious, it's a big mystery," muttered the boy, "but I'm in better shape than I was, and I'm going to look for Ben."

He now flashed the lantern about so as to get his bearings. He could see that the current which had caught Ben's boat was scarcely three feet from him, but he didn't just like to trust to that.

"I'll keep alongside of it," he determined, "but I won't get caught if I can help it, for I might want to turn back."

There was some difficulty in doing this, but Harry was quite an expert at the paddle, and managed to accomplish it. After a time he came to the end of the cavern, and saw the water go pouring into the tunnel.

"That's it! That's where Ben went!" thought the boy, with a shudder.

He paddled further away, lest the canoe should be caught in the current, and remained motionless for some moments, debating whether he should try it in the tunnel or not. Meanwhile nothing had occurred to break the profound silence which reigned in the cavern, and this made the shrill scream which suddenly broke upon his ears more startling when it came.

"Help! Help!"

The cry seemed to come from over among the skeletons on the other side of the current. It echoed through the recesses of the cavern until a hundred tongues seemed to be shouting for help. Could it be the girl Lena? Harry thought of that, and he also thought of Ben, whose voice was almost as high-pitched as a girl's.

He paddled as rapidly as possible back in the direction by which he had come, until he thought it safe to strike across the current. Suddenly the cry came again.

"Help! Help!"

"Who are you?" shouted Harry.

"I am Lena. Oh, please help me, whoever you are."

"I'll be with you in a moment if there is any way of getting up," called Harry, driving the canoe forward for all he was worth.

He was soon under the house, which was constructed of planks laid from one skeleton to another, with uprights rising from them, and a roof above. A rude ladder stood leaning against the foreleg of one of the skeletons, which Harry at once saw could be used to climb up to the trap-door by simply pushing it up a little. He made fast to the leg, and, adjusting the ladder,

climbed up and pushed open the trap, lantern in hand, and with the rifle flung over his shoulder.

"Lena, sure enough!" he exclaimed, as the light struck full upon the girl's sweet face.

"Why, it's you!" was the astonished exclamation. "Oh, I'm so glad!"

She seized Harry's hands with a display of affection which was somewhat confusing.

"Who else did you expect to see?" Harry asked.

"Dunn."

"Did he bring you here?"

"Yes."

"Where is he now?"

"I'm sure I don't know. He went away some time ago. Oh, I got so afraid."

"There's nothing to be afraid of now," replied Harry, glancing about at the comfortable little roost with its stove, chairs, table, etc. There was even a bed in the corner, but the place must have been dark before Harry came.

"No, no! Now you're here, I'm not afraid."

"But I don't understand——"

"No, and there's no use trying to!" broke in a voice behind him suddenly. "It would only be a waste of time, Harry Edwards, for you and I are going to square accounts!"

What was this? Had Lena betrayed him? For the moment Harry could not think otherwise, for there close by the table stood Mr. Jerry Dunn, the drummer, with a rifle leveled at his head.

"Ha, ha! You swallowed the bait slick as a whistle!" he laughed, sneeringly. "Better say your prayers, boy, for I'm going to put a hole through your heart!"

CHAPTER XI.—The Mayor's Little Move.

"You want to be very careful when you cross the plaza that no one sees you."

"I'll keep a sharp lookout. What time ought I to be there?"

"Say eight o'clock. If the matter can be arranged we ought to start by nine."

And old Jess Weeks, miner, ore miller, and the moneyed man of Black Buttes, left Ben Jones and walked off down Market street, Ben turning back into the Mountain House, where he was soon comfortably seated at tea. Quite a change from the boy's situation when we last saw him, to be sure. The fact is, Jess Weeks had proved a friend in need to Ben, and, as the old saying goes, a friend in need is a friend indeed. It seemed that Captain Jess, as he was usually called, was the leader of a band of citizens who styled themselves a Vigilance Committee, and felt that they had a duty to perform. Too many men had been reported missing in Black Buttes of late to suit the citizens. Strangely enough each and every one of these had been last seen in or about the Elkshead saloon. There was a significance about the fact which suggested to the vigilance committee the propriety of exploring the run over which Mayor Stafford's mill was built. The result was they discovered Ben, and of course when an understanding was reached, Captain Jess learned all the boy had to tell.

"What in thunder!" he exclaimed. "Can't McElpatrick trust to me? I wrote him that I was at work at that business, and now he sends two

young d—s out here to disarrange my plans. Hornswaggle me ef I hain't harf a mind to chuck up ther hull case."

That Captain Jess changed his mind in this regard is evidenced by the fact that he took Ben to the Mountain House and made him comfortable, promising to head a search party to start back among the mountains after Harry that very night. He was immensely interested in the latter Night.

After supper Ben hung around the hotel until it was nearly time for his appointment, and then, lighting a cigar, sallied forth. Following the directions given him he avoided Market street and started another way for Captain Jess's mill, where he had promised to report at the little side door. It was but a short walk. In three minutes Ben would have covered the ground. Two passed without his meeting anyone; but in the third, just as he was about to turn down toward the creek, a man came charging around the corner so suddenly that he ran straight into the boy, almost knocking him down.

"Holy smoke! The boy!"

The two flew apart as suddenly as they had come together, the man exclaiming as above. Ben stopped to hear no more. The cat was out of the bag now, and all his precaution had been in vain, for the stranger was no less a person than Mr. Wyoming Jack.

"Hold on! Hold on there, or I'll bore a hole through you!" he shouted, as Ben made a dive past him and went bounding down the hill.

Crack! Crack! Suddenly two pistols shots broke the stillness, and two bullets went whistling past Ben's ear as he gained the little side door of Captain Jess's mill.

"Great gosh! what's the matter with you?" demanded the old man, when, upon opening the door in response to Ben's furious knocking, the boy came bounding in.

"Ran right into the fellow I met on the bridge," panted Ben, "and got fired at—that's all."

He led Ben through a room filled with the curious machinery used in quartz crushing, pausing at last before a door at the extreme end, upon which he knocked three times. After a moment's delay the door was opened just a crack and out came a head.

"That you, Cap'n Jess?"

"O. K. And your friend?"

"He's the young gent I was tellin' about."

"Good enough. Come in."

It was into a room blue with smoke that Ben was ushered. Here at least twenty men were assembled, who stood talking earnestly together in little groups.

"Here he is, gents!" cried Captain Jess, jumping up upon a big box where all could see him. "Here he is, and he's gone an' throw'd the fat all inter the fire, b'gosh!"

"Spit it right out, captain!" came from a dozen lips.

"Why, he's gone an' run right into Wyoming Jack, and the scoundrel drewed a bead onto him."

"I say it's high time Black Buttes was rid of these fellers!" cried a little man with a very shrill voice. "They hev kept back the growth of this town a good five year, gents, an' I maintain, feller citizens, that when in ther course of human events it becomes necessary to——"

"Oh, cheese it, kun'l! We don't want no long-winded speechifyin'!" broke in another.

"Not much. None of yer has-been or gointer-wases—we want yer is-be's!" said a third.

"No more confab, gents!" cried Jess Weeks. "Majority rules. 'Twouldn't do to tech Squire Stafford till we could get stronger testimony agin him than the say-so of this boy. I vote we start to-night, and—say, look here, I'll be hornswaggled if I don't smell smoke."

"I've been smellin' it for some time," said Ben. "I'm sure there's something wrong."

"Open the door?" cried Captain Jess. "We must look into this."

The order was obeyed, and when the door flew open the rush of smoke which came pouring in was stifling, while outside in the mill the crackling of burning wood could be distinctly heard.

"Thunderation! my mill is afire!" cried Jess Weeks. "Lay out of this, boys! This is more of Stafford's villainous work!"

It was easier said than done, laying out through the smoke. Through the floor great tongues of flame were shooting up, making it almost dangerous to pass them. Ben and Captain Jess were the first to reach the little side door, and when the latter tried to open it, to his intense surprise he found it as firm as a rock, and a hasty examination disclosed the fact that it had been nailed up from the outside!

"Try the other door, boys! Try the other door!" shouted the mill owner. "There ain't no time to be lost! Them fellers mean to roast the hull lot of us—that's what's the matter with Hannah Jane! It's another of our lovely mayor's little moves."

It was no joke retreating through the flames, which had gained fearful headway now. Once more Ben and Captain Jess were foremost. When they reached the other door they discovered to their horror that it was nailed as firmly as the first, and all their efforts would not stir it the smallest fraction of an inch.

"Well, this is tough." Ben Jones was the one who said it. He pushed Captain Jess aside and jumped upon the window-sill. Then he swung out and let go, landing in the street and ran, shouting "Fire! Fire." He soon had a crowd, and someone brought a ladder, with which the other occupants were released from the burning building.

There was no sleep for anyone in Black Buttes that night. Next morning Captain Jess and Ben Jones, with a party of ten, rode out of town bound for Rocky Gulch and the Haunted Hut. Jess and Ben had pushed on considerably in advance when they caught sight of the Hut way up in the air on the side of the gulch. Not waiting for the others, they took the trail on the edge of the gulch and rode rapidly. Just at the narrowest part of the trail Ben's horse stumbled, throwing Ben over his head over the ledge. Ben gave up as lost, but he fell into a vast quantity of snow, which broke his fall for an instant. But suddenly there was a cracking of boards and he found himself going through the roof of a shed, landing on the ground inside. On one wall of the shed hung a lighted lantern. Seeing a door in one side, he took down the lantern, opened the door, and seeing a passage, started through. Soon he came out in a natural cave, upon the floor of which were heaps

of stones. He bent over the nearest pile, and found the stones bristled with gold.

"Great Scott," breathed Ben, "I have found Mr. McElpatrick's gold mine. I have found the Western Queen."

CHAPTER XII.—Strange Conduct of Skeleton

Crack! It was Mr. Jerry Dunn's rifle which sounded, and the ball went whistling harmlessly past Harry Edwards' head.

Harry had unshipped his rifle by this time, and would have fired if the girl had not blocked the way.

"Out of the way! Out of the way, or I'll kill you!" shouted the drummer, rushing angrily forward, when suddenly he halted with a sharp cry.

"Great heavens! What is it? Look! Look!"

Nor was Harry less amazed. He even forgot that he was about to shoot Mr. Jerry Dunn, and his rifle dropped from his shoulder as he stared toward the corner by the bed in surprise. It was the living skeleton. There he stood, just as Harry had seen him last, the loose bones hung all over his tight-fitting black suit rattling as he moved with a swaying motion from side to side.

"Wretch! murderer! thief!" he exclaimed in hollow tones. "Would you add another to your list of crimes?"

But Mr. Jerry Dunn never stopped to answer. With one wild yell he bounded to the trap-door and dropped out of sight. The girl Lena, meanwhile, had fallen to the floor in a dead faint.

A loud splash followed the sound, then all was still.

For a moment they stood listening. Not a sound broke the stillness save the groans of Lena, who lay upon the floor.

"Safe," breathed the skeleton. "Boy, you see now what it is trust me. I promised to defend you, and at the critical moment I came."

"By gracious, I'd like to know how you come then, and how you go?"

"Wait, wait! I'll make you rich! I'll make McElpatrick, who sent you, rich! Ha, ha!"

"He's mad," thought Harry. "There can't be any doubt about that."

"I'll send you back to McElpatrick with flying colors. Ha, ha! Oh, yes! Ho, ho, ho! Come with me!"

"Where to?"

"To the treasure house of the forty thieves. Ho, ho, ho!"

It was horrible to look at him when he laughed. His face was gaunt and hollow to a hideous degree, and yet, as Harry saw it now, in a reasonably strong light, he suddenly discovered something in it that stirred his soul to its lowest depths.

"Speak! Who are you? I will know your name!" he cried.

"No, no! Not yet! Hist! Be careful or you will ruin all. Take the girl and follow me."

"You must tell me where."

"I won't."

"Then I won't go!"

"Yes, you will, my boy—Hallie, oh yes, you will!"

Harry started. For a moment the two stood staring at each other.

"Are you mad, or are you acting a part?" breathed the boy, in hollow tones.

"Will you go?"

"Yes; lead on."

What had Harry discovered? Something that agitated him terribly, and no mistake.

"I'll go, I'll go," he muttered.

"Good! We'll go now, just as soon as we can arouse this girl."

Ten minutes later the canoe moved away from between the skeleton mastodons laden with a strange freight. At the bow sat the living skeleton, laughing and muttering; in the stern crouched Lena, her face buried in her hands, while amidships Harry worked the paddle for all he knew, keeping his eye upon the lantern which the skeleton held, moving it right or left, according as he wished the boy to steer. Not a word was spoken now, and the boat moved noiselessly on, until at last it struck hard against the rocks, and the skeleton leaping out, made fast.

"We are here," he exclaimed.

"I'm in your hands," said Harry, a perceptible tremble in his voice.

"Good! Good!"

"Shall we get out?"

"In a moment. I want to see if Dunn has been here before me—he had a boat, though perhaps you did not know that."

"No."

"It's a fact."

"Hadn't I better get out?"

"Wait—wait! Ha, ha! Just think how long I've been waiting! I'll show you gold, boy. Ho, ho! I'll show you gold!"

Waving the lantern wildly, the skeleton went dashing up the rocks, the loose bones rattling as he went. Moments passed—anxious moments. The light which had been flashing from side to side now burned steadily in the distance, but the man did not return.

"Hello, hello!" shouted Harry, after a little.

No answer came back.

"Great heavens! I wonder if he can have vanished again!" thought the boy.

He leaped out, and ran up the rocks toward the light, coming presently upon the lantern standing at the foot of a flight of steps, roughly cut in the solid stone. There was no one near the lantern—no one in sight, in fact. Again and again Harry shouted, but he could get no answer save the echo of his own voice.

"He's gone again!" murmured the boy. "What am I to do?"

"Go up the steps!"

It was just as though the skeleton had spoken in his ear. With a start Harry turned to look, but still not a soul was to be seen.

"I'll do just as he says all the same," he muttered. "If he says go up the steps, up the steps it is."

He hurried back to the boat where the girl Lena still sat, her face buried in her hands. She was weeping softly to herself.

"Come—we must leave the canoe now!" called Harry, with a decided coolness in his tone.

Lena arose and staggered forward. Harry lent her a hand and in a second she stood beside him on the rocks.

"Where are we going?"

"Don't know," replied Harry. "You can go with me or stay, just as you please."

"Oh, I'll go! I'll go!"

"Suit yourself."

"I'm going. Where is he?"

"Don't know. I'm not going to wait to find out, either. Come on."

Lantern in hand, Harry now started up the stairs, the girl following. They seemed interminable. Harry was thoroughly winded when at last the end was reached, and he found himself standing before a narrow door of rough wood which stood slightly ajar. He pushed it open, and to his utter amazement found himself in the haunted hut!

CHAPTER XIII.—Ghosts Again.

"Great Scott!"

"What's the matter?" asked the gentle voice of the girl Lena, who was just coming through the door.

"Why, we are in that hut again!"

"So we are! I had no idea we were anywhere near it."

"Near it! I supposed we were miles away from it. This beats anything I ever saw."

It was certainly very puzzling. Everything in the room was precisely as they had left it, except that the fire had died out. Even the table stood spread with the dishes which Ben had placed upon it. Tears sprang to Harry's eyes as he thought of his friend.

"Well, well, this beats all!" he exclaimed. "We may as well make ourselves comfortable now we are here, though. I'm as hungry as a badger, and mean to have something to eat."

"Let me help," said Lena, beginning to bustle about.

Harry said nothing. The fact is, he was not feeling particularly friendly toward the girl just about then, as will be explained later on. He felt that she had betrayed him into the hands of Dunn, and all the explanation Lena had been able to make so far only seemed to make matters worse, for she claimed that the man had forced her to call as she did. Harry now started to investigate, taking the door by which they had entered first. It opened from the chimney piece at the side, and seemed to be a peculiar affair altogether, for when he pulled it shut he could not open it again—could not even find the lock. This was puzzling. Harry bent down to see if the secret spring was near the floor.

"Look out! He's going to shoot!" screamed Lena's voice suddenly.

At that very instant two rifle shots rang out, and Harry Edwards toppled forward, falling upon his face beside the great chimney of the haunted hut. Time passed—moments lengthened into hours, night had long since settled down upon Rocky Gulch, when Harry suddenly awakened out of a deep sleep, it seemed to him, and found himself lying upon his back directly in front of the big hearth upon which a smoldering fire dimly burned.

"Oh—owch! Ah!"

Racking pain was what he got for trying to move an arm, and when he attempted to pull himself up he discovered that he was tied hand and foot, and almost paralyzed as well.

"Great heavens!" murmured the boy. "Here's an interesting state of affairs! Was I shot? Guess I must have been. Wonder what's become of the girl?"

He remembered all—remembered seeing the

drummer standing by the outer door with a smoking rifle in his hand just as he felt the sting of the bullet and his senses left him.

"Lena! Lena!" he called faintly. He would have been glad of her presence now.

There was no answer but a low mocking laugh, which seemed to rise from a distant corner of the room, followed immediately by the sound of music, just as if someone were playing the banjo at a great distance away.

A cold shudder passed over Harry from head to foot as he lay there. Instinctively he seemed to know that the apparently supernatural occurrences of the previous night were about to be repeated again. His eyes were fixed on the fire now, and he could not remove them. There seemed to be some horrible fascination about those dying embers which he could not shake off. Presently a very singular thing occurred. As Harry continued to watch the fire he suddenly saw a human face among the embers—a head seemed to be forming right among the coals.

Horrible! It was the face, the head, the beard, in every particular the same old ghost which Harry had seen before. Slowly it rose among the coals like a veritable Salamander, and stood before the boy, dim and shadowy, gliding off to the right, until it had passed beyond the range of Harry's eyes. It was horrible! Harry felt his brain reeling, but he was at the mercy of the ghosts, for struggle as he would, he could not move hand nor foot. Now suddenly he saw another head in the fire. Slowly it arose, until a woman with long, dangling locks stepped out upon the hearth and glided away, just as the old man had done a moment before, waving her hand at the boy as she passed. Still the distant plunk! plunk! of the banjo hung upon the air. Now came another man, then a child—a boy—then a woman again, then two men, mounted upon a snow-white horse, each rising out of the embers and gliding away in turn.

So great had become Harry's sense of horror now that he could only lay and stare. Suddenly three men stood before him, hideous creatures with heads like animals, having horns. They did not come from the fire, nor could Harry explain their appearance. It was enough that they were there; enough that after hovering over him a moment they suddenly bent down and seized him—two by the shoulders, one by the feet—and lifting him clear of the floor, ran back into the dark shadows between the broad projecting chimney piece and the wall.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the same sepulchral voice. "Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!"

Then in a moment the room was empty. A stranger entering the room would have searched the haunted hut for some trace of Harry Edwards in vain.

The next Harry knew he was in a cave-like place. The walls were hung with curtains and the floor covered with rugs. Dunn was seated in an easy-chair with a cigar in his mouth.

"I've shot at you till I'm tired," he said. "You have the nine lives of a cat. You got the best of me in Chicago that night, when——"

"Was that you who attacked me after I left Mr. McElfatrick's?"

"Well, it was no one else."

"I think I can call your right name."

"What is it?"

"Jack McElfatrick."

"You've hit it."

"Why do you want to kill me? I am here on your father's business."

But right here a gong sounded, and Jack McElfatrick got up and bounded out between the curtains. Soon Harry heard a step and Lena appeared before him.

Harry said to her: "You have betrayed me."

Lena answered: "He made me. He is my husband. But I have come to save you. Your father was once the superintendent of this mine—the Western Queen."

"Show me the mine and I will never forget you."

"Come, brace up, and I will grant your request."

Harry managed to rise, after Lena had cut his bonds, and with her help and guidance, they went back of the curtains and through a passage to an opening which looked into a tunnel, where there were several men at work. They were engaged in mining and the roof of the tunnel, walls, and a great pile of stones fairly glittered with gold.

"Merciful heavens, what's that?" suddenly asked Lena.

It was a loud explosion, followed by a falling of rocks all about them and then intense darkness.

CHAPTER XIV.—The Interrupted Plot.

As Mr. Jack McElfatrick, alias Jerry Dunn, alias several other names, heard the bell ring he knew that it meant business, which is the reason he left Harry in such haste. The fact is, Mr. Jack McElfatrick had a good deal more business on his hands than people were generally aware of. Those who took the fellow for a conscienceless idler were most mightily mistaken. Conscienceless he certainly was, but never an idler—that was just where McElfatrick, senior, and in fact nearly all who knew him in Chicago, were away off the track. The bell sounded and Jack McElfatrick walked straight out of the underground apartment where Harry lay into a narrow passage which had once formed one of the tunnels of the mine. Hurrying through this, his way made plain by the electric lights which he had brought up from Chicago at an enormous outlay, he came presently into a small, square chamber, fitted up as an office, and as handsomely fitted up, we want it understood, as any Board of Trade man's office on La Salle street or Monroe. A rosewood rolling desk, expensive oak chairs, a handsome mantel, with a cheerful grate fire burning beneath, and glittering brass and irons, sparkling chandelier, and other "fixings," while heavy curtains hung on all sides, concealing the rocky walls of the cave. When Jack McElfatrick entered there was the mayor of Black Buttes seated before the fire with his big boots, into which his pantaloons were tucked hoisted upon the fender trying to put the fire out by frequent expectorations on the coals.

"Hello, cap!" he exclaimed. "How you was?"

"Oh, it's you, is it, squire?" replied Jack. "I wondered who was ringing the bell."

"Well, 'tain't no one else. Say, I got your telephone, cap."

"Did you carry out my orders, squire?" demanded Jack, leaning against the mantel-piece and lighting a cigar.

"You bet."

"You caught the boy as he came through the run?"

"You bet."

"And dumped him down the mill race?"

"You bet, and ground the old turbine wheel for a good ten minutes, which ought to have knocked the stuffing out of him, but would you believe it, cap, for all that, the blamed little rat managed to crawl out and escape."

"How did that happen?"

"Why, all about it is this: I got your telephone and put Wyoming Jack at the bridge to watch for the boy. Bimeby along he came, and Jack worked him into the Elkshead. 'Twas blamed odd, too, the little snoozer inquired for me."

"Yes, yes! Jump to where you found out he wasn't dead. I'm in a deuce of a hurry."

"O. K. That was toward night when Jack met him going down C street to Jess Weeks' mill. To make a long story short, the Vigilantes were holding a meeting in the mill, and must have got hold of the boy some way, so Jack and me nailed up the doors and set the mill afire underneath; the blamed old crib burned like tinder, and I made no doubt all hands were roasted inside, for you know as well as I do how high up from the ground the windows are. Well, he must be dead now."

"Is that all the reason you have for believing the boy is dead?"

"Yes."

Jack McElfatrick gave a snort of contempt.

"Squire, you've been lushing again. You don't know what you're talking about," he exclaimed angrily. "Do you suppose for an instant they wouldn't jump from the windows, even if they were a little high? By thunder, you've made as big a botch of your end of the business as I've made of mine."

"What?"

"Well, I'll tell you. He's one of a pair of young snoozers my father sent out here to prowl about and discover the secret of the Western Queen."

"The deuce you say!"

"Keep your shirt on! It's just as I tell you. Now, the old man went and told me, never dreaming that I had anything to do with the business. Of course, I followed the fellows from Chicago; in fact, I got ahead of them. Chance brought them to the hut, and chance again threw them in with Lena, who got rusty and tried to kill herself."

"Go on—go on!"

"Well, the boys rescued Lena and brought her to the hut. Next morning I showed up and sent 'em adrift through Rocky Gulch. When they got to the cave I tried the light racket an' showed 'em the skeletons; guess that scared 'em, and—however, there's no use making a long story of it. One fellow got overboard, and the other went adrift through the tunnel. I've got my boy in

the next room, wounded, and intend to make short work of him, but the Lord knows where yours is."

"Bad business," muttered the mayor. "Bad business."

"The boy I've got is the son of old Edwards, the super."

"No!"

"Yes. And what's more, old Edwards has turned up alive!"

"Never!" cried the mayor, leaping to his feet. "Never! I threw the man down the old shaft with my own hands."

"Can't help it. He's alive. I saw him or his ghost between the mastodons."

"Where is he now?"

"Don't know. He got off, and the worst of it is took the Edwards boy and Lena with him."

"But I thought——"

"Oh, I got the boy, but the girl, confound her, has managed to give me the slip somehow. She's hiding somewhere underground here, and I'll have her yet."

"Kill her! Kill her when you get her. I tell you, cap, these women are dangerous critters."

"Never you mind. I'll fix her. Now, what's to be did?"

"Elest if I know. Here we are with three million all ready to ship, and——"

"And the vigilantes after us. It's tough, but I propose we go right ahead and ship, just the same. We can load up the boats, run 'em through the tunnel to-night, and reach the railroad before anyone gets wind of it. Then we can lay low for a while. If they find the mine, we need never come back."

"That's the talk. We can get past Weeks' mill now; it's burned, and you may thank me for that."

Boom! Boom! Boom! Even while he was speaking a fearful explosion rent the air, shaking the ground like an earthquake, and sending a huge mass of rock tumbling from the roof of the cave at their feet.

"The dynamite! The dynamite is off!" roared Jack, springing toward the opening by which he had entered.

A mass of broken rock blocked their way.

"We are lost!" groaned the mayor. "That's only the little chest of dynamite, and I know it! There'll be the big one in a minute, which will bury us alive!"

CHAPTER XV.—The Skeleton's Secret.

Boom! Boom! Following fast upon the heels of the explosion which had so startled Harry and Lena came two others of no less intensity, seeming to shake the very foundations of the earth.

From the other side of the partition groans, shrieks and dismal cries went up; the full horror of the moment no pen can describe. Now great calamities sometimes so overshadow smaller troubles as to rouse us to action when we might be expected to give up in despair.

Harry braced up to the situation nobly. The wound in his back, serious as it might become under aggravated conditions, was not yet serious enough to interfere with his movements. Presently the crashing ceased, and a dense black smoke began to fill the confined space.

Harry struck one of his matches, but all was so thick that he could distinguish nothing. Trying it again in a moment, he found that they were cut off by the fallen rocks on both sides, and could neither advance nor retreat.

"Bless my soul, what shall we do?" he muttered.

"We can't get out now. The way I was going to take you is blocked now," breathed Lena, who had quieted down.

"This is perfectly fearful!" groaned the boy. "I really don't see what we are going to do."

"Look! Look!" screamed Lena, before the sentence was fully formed.

A light had suddenly shot up, coming from behind the pile of stones nearest the door, and over the top of the heap Harry saw a head pushing slowly up. No wonder Lena was frightened. The head was that of the Living Skeleton, looking hideous and ghastly in that uncertain light. It came up from behind the rocks, the body following it, the loose bones hanging over the tight-fitting black cloth rattling as the form came scrambling down lantern in hand.

"Father!" breathed Harry. "Father!"

"Ha, ha, ha! So you know me, Hal! So you know me!" exclaimed the man, in the same high-pitched voice.

"I have guessed the truth," replied Harry, striving to be calm.

"I am your father."

"I know it."

"Ha, ha! Ain't I a father to be proud of? Answer me, son! Answer me!"

"Don't excite yourself. If there is a way out of this hole show it to us, and I'll try and forget the past."

"Forget the past! Do you mean to say I ever wronged you, Hal?"

"You went off and left poor mother to work herself into her grave, father. You——"

The deep-set eyes blazed with excitement, the man seemed trembling from head to foot.

"Stop! Stop!" he exclaimed. "What you say is true. I don't deny it. I was gold-struck—don't you know, son, that gold drives all men mad?"

"Father, do try and be sensible," said Harry. "What has happened here—do you know?"

"Do I know—yes! I ought to know. It was I who fired the train. A few thousand dynamite cartridges have exploded—that's all."

"And you did it?"

"I did it. This mine belongs to me. I discovered it. I spent all I possessed opening it, then old McElpatrick tried to steal it from me, and young McElpatrick hired the mayor of Black Buttes to kill me—me, who was the only honest man in Idaho—but I'm square with them now!"

"He's mad—hopelessly mad. We shall never escape from this dreadful place!" Harry groaned. The fact is, he had no great confidence in any good which might come out of this strange resurrection of his father, for Mr. Edwards had always been a man of uncertain habits, and had not made any regular provision for his family for some years before he disappeared. Moments passed and still the skeleton rambled on about his secrets. He told how he had escaped from the old mining shaft into which the Mayor of Black Buttes had thrown him, how he lost his way

among the intricate windings of the cavern, which was not all taken up by the lake, by any means. He told further how for two years he had wandered about a maniac subsisting on strange food, which it is not necessary to mention; how at last, reason returning—if, indeed, it could be said to have returned even now—he found himself dressed as we now find him, and still in the cave. These and other things he told of—they were the skeleton's secrets. It seemed impossible to turn him from them. Harry grew desperate at last.

"Father, you must stop!" he exclaimed. "We were pursued by Jack McElfrick. At any moment he may be upon us. No matter how the son has wronged you, remember that I have a duty I owe to the father. I——"

"Follow me and you will be shown a way out."

"And you?"

"I shall remain behind. I have my work to finish. Come, come!"

He immediately began climbing back over the pile of loose rock, and Harry followed, helping Lena along the best he could. Soon they found themselves suddenly standing before an arched opening in the wall.

"See, son! This is the way!" called Mr. Edwards.

"This is the original shaft sunk by me on the property," he added. "We are now directly underneath the hut."

There were ladders in the shaft, rude affairs lashed together one above the other, and fastened to the wall. They stood perpendicular, and it looked as if it might be a very ticklish business to climb them.

"Go on!" exclaimed the skeleton, standing back. "You first, Hal; the girl can follow."

He set the light down upon the bottom of the shaft, and moved back out of sight before Harry could say anything.

"Are you going?" asked Lena.

"Not until he comes—no!"

"I think you had better."

"Why?"

"It's my opinion he means to fire the rest of the dynamite. If he does, he'll blow us all to atoms!"

"Go, then!" exclaimed Harry. "Go at once. I must get back and prevent him from killing himself if I can."

Lena needed no urging. Grasping the ladder rounds, she went up with an agility which showed her by no means unused to that sort of climbing. Harry darted through the arch and struck back by the way they came.

"Father! Father!" he shouted.

Suddenly a light shot up ahead of him close to the ground. There was the "living skeleton" kneeling with a burning match between his fingers. He seemed to be looking for something along the wall.

"Father! Father!! What are you trying to do?" shouted Harry, dashing forward.

"Trying to find the fuse to blow this infernal old mine to thunder!" shrieked Mr. Edwards wildly. "Ha! Here it is! Ho, ho! Now she goes! Run, boy! Run as though Old Nick was after you! Only the top of those ladders means safety now, for there's two thousand dynamite cartridges at the end of that fuse!"

CHAPTER XVI.—Ben and the Ghost.

Now, do not fancy for a moment that we have altogether lost sight of Ben Jones. Of course, the boy had not been idle all this time; very far from it, we can assure you. Since the moment he found himself so unexpectedly introduced to the mysteries of the Western Queen, Ben had been on the continual jump. Gold, gold everywhere! The ground was strewn with it. Ben was amazed as he looked this way and that. He pushed on into the excavation and came suddenly upon the body of a man lying stretched upon the floor, flat on his back.

He bent forward in a second and looked again.

"Phew! Dead drunk, that's what's the matter. Smells like a distillery. I've got an idea."

In ten minutes a casual observer might have supposed that Ben Jones was lying on the ground dead drunk, and Mr. Miner standing over him.

There had been a little clothes changing act—fortunately they were about the same size—and through it all the sleeper slept as though he did not expect to awake until the crack of doom.

"Now we'll see what we shall see!" muttered Ben.

He picked up a small lantern which stood beside the man, and having lighted it, moved on. Before he had gone a dozen steps the passage ended and a door was encountered. Ben opened the door and found himself in a small room with tools of all sorts scattered about. He was just taking a survey of the place when out of the shadows at the other end of the apartment a man came staggering, evidently as drunk as a lord.

"Hello! What yer want?" he demanded.

Ben was almost too much startled to answer. It was the elderly ghost seen in the haunted hut.

"That you, Dick?" he hiccupped.

"Yes," replied Ben, cheekily. "So you're full again, old man."

"As a bloomin' goat, bet yer life."

"As a bloomin' ghost, you mean."

"Ha, ha! Yer right. Ghost it is! Old Roundsy's the boy to play ghost. That 'minds me, gotter do ther ghost biz right erway now. Come on, Dick, an' help me. Ther boss told me to be on hand to work ther magic lantern any time he gimme ther call. Come an' help me."

"Course I will."

Ben was jubilant.

"Roundsy, Roundsy! That means that this fellow is the Old Rounds Jess Weeks was talking about," reasoned Ben. "Oh, I'll stick to him like a brother, betcher life! He shall take me to the hut, and as soon as I've found out what I want to know I'll open the door and skip. Like enough Weeks and the rest will be along by that time, and we'll scoop in the whole gang."

Whereupon Ben proceeded to make himself exceedingly agreeable to the elderly ghost. It took time to get the ghost started, though, for he had a bottle in his pocket—the mere mention of the word speaks volumes. By passages and ladders he led Ben on, talking and stopping to interview the bottle until Ben thought they would never get anywhere, but at last a trap-door was raised, and Ben found himself standing in the haunted hut. The ghost closed the trap and out came the bottle again, and it was handed to Ben.

Ben pretended to drink.

"Shall we get things ready for the ghost business?" he asked.

"Come on, then. It's my own invention. Folly me up ther ladder an' you'll see."

Whereupon the ghost began to climb the ladder leading to the loft, pushing open the trap when he reached the top, and disappearing from view.

"Now's my time," muttered Ben. "I'll find out about the ghosts later on."

But he never did, nor did anyone else.

"Why don't you come!" shouted Old Rounds from above.

Scarce were the words spoken when a fearful explosion somewhere in the depths below them shook the hut with so much violence as to almost throw the boy off his feet.

"Great Scott! What's that!" cried Ben.

He heard a heavy fall and then a groan. Down the ladder pitched Old Rounds, striking the floor with a thud. Ben never waited to investigate. He sprang to the door, and flinging it open, rushed out into the night.

CHAPTER XVII.—Done by Dynamite.

"Fly, Hallie, fly!" screamed Mr. Edwards wildly. "Don't you understand what I say? It's death to remain here?"

"Come with me—oh, do come with me!"

"No, I will not! They robbed me of my mine—now they shall lose it just as they think they've got it!" raved the "skeleton."

Meanwhile the lighted fuse was sputtering and snapping away upon the ground.

"Are you ever coming!" screamed Lena, as Harry caught the first ladder and pulled himself up as easily as though he had never been wounded at all. Lena was standing upon a little shelf of rock at the top of the three lashed ladders, and in a moment Harry was by her side.

"Your father! Ain't your father coming?" gasped the girl, who seemed to be almost beside herself with fright.

"No! He has refused."

They were standing in what is known in mining phraseology as a drift. Harry came to the conclusion that the way out must be by a winze, or side shaft extending from one drift to another, for there were no more ladders in the main shaft. This proved to be the case. A moment's examination showed it to be so. Still another moment, and they were ascending other ladders through the winze. Lena was ahead, for Harry would have it so, thinking her chances would be better that way. Was the explosion never coming? It almost began to look as though the fuse had gone out. In a moment they were in the second drift, and then upon more ladders up through another winze. There seemed to have been a great deal of work done in this part of the mine.

"It's gone out—it surely must have gone out," said Lena.

"Have we much further to go?" Harry asked.

"I can tell you nothing about it. This mine is made up partly of natural caves and——"

It had come, and no mistake. Suddenly the boom of a fearful explosion burst upon them with deafening force. Great masses of stone fell crashing, the earth seemed to rock and tremble—the ladders were torn from their fastenings—a dense, suffocating smoke filled the winze—it was as though the hour of chaos had come. And

Harry Edwards, though still alive, felt no hope, for the ladder was gone beneath him, and above as well, and here he was clinging desperately with one hand to the piece that remained, while with the other arm he supported the girl Lena, who had come tumbling down upon him at the first shock. Horrible beyond all powers of description was the situation; no wonder the boy's brain reeled and his heart grew faint and sick. Around him all was as dark as Egypt, for the lantern which until now Harry held on to had been dropped. To descend was impossible, to go on equally out of the question; that he had caught the girl as he did was little short of a miracle; that he could hold on to her much longer was not to be thought of. No wonder the poor boy felt all the horrors of black despair, and yet he was alive and the awful moment over, and it is in the nature of man to hope.

"Oh, let me go, let me go!" wailed Lena. "I want to die. Save yourself, and let me go."

"Which I would not do, even if I knew I could be saved in one instant," answered the brave boy, setting his teeth firmly. "No, Lena, no; I shall not let you go."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake! It is no use! You can't hold me. I am killing you!"

"I will hold you, though you kill me. I will never—merciful God! What is that?"

It was a voice calling from above:

"Is anyone down there?"

"Help! Help!" shouted Harry.

"Lost, lost!" breathed Lena. "Oh, this is the worst of all."

She knew—she understood—where Harry did not. Than to be saved under some conditions, better death. But Harry did not know, and when the light came from above and strong arms were stretched out, he passed Lena up, and, seizing a hand, was drawn up himself—drawn up to safety, but only to be confronted with Mr. Jack McElpatrick, who stood regarding Lena prostrate before him, with an evil glitter in his eye.

"Good enough! This is as it should be!" exclaimed the villain. "Hold on to the boy, Stafford. I'll take the girl. By thunder, there'll be some satisfaction in boring a hole through his treacherous heart!"

CHAPTER XVIII.—The End.

"Oh, you blasted idiot! You drunken fool! I believe in my soul that the rum jug is at the bottom of all this ruin!" roared Mr. Jack McElpatrick, in a torrent of rage.

Now, when the remark was made Mr. Jack McElpatrick had Old Rounds by the collar and was shaking him as a terrier dog might shake a rat. The scene was the haunted hut again. Present: Harry Edwards, with his hands tied behind him; the girl, Lena, weeping on the lounge; the mayor of Black Buttes, looking very much rattled; the heir of the house of McElpatrick and his howling victim, Ben's elderly ghost, who had been found sleeping on the floor with a badly battered head when through the secret trap Harry was lifted up into the hut.

"Leggo! Leggo! Yer killing me, cap!" whined the old man piteously.

"Get up to the loft there, you white-headed old lush-tub!" roared McElpatrick. "Ghosts! Give us ghosts! For I'm going to make a ghost of

this blamed young spy in just about two shakes."

He was fairly furious in his rage, but he saw that he was simply wasting time with Old Rounds. As the man slunk up the ladder Jack seized Harry, and pushed him against the fireplace. Then, grasping a rifle, he backed away.

"Hold him there, Stafford! Hold him while I bore a hole in his heart," he roared.

The mayor of Black Buttes turned pale. None knew better than he to what lengths this desperate man could go when he was enraged. As for Harry, a strange calmness seemed to have settled down upon him—all his strength had departed now. A mist was before his eyes, his brain was reeling, he was utterly powerless to help himself by as much as a movement of the hand. Was it imagination, or was it Old Rounds at work again? Suddenly a tall, shadowy form rose at Harry's feet. It was the counterpart of the old man himself, and Harry could see straight through it—could see Jack McElpatrick back away toward the door as the mayor's grip came upon his arm.

"Stop! Stop! You shan't kill him, Jack!" screamed Lena, springing from the lounge and throwing herself upon her husband.

"Back, woman! Interfere with me, and you die!" roared the villain, raising his rifle again as he flung the girl aside.

An instant must end all now, and Harry's eyes closed involuntarily. Bang! Bang!

"Down with them, boys! Don't let 'em escape!" roared a voice loud enough to wake the dead.

What was this? What magic had been brought in the haunted hut now? To Harry Edwards it was as if a hand had suddenly been extended to turn the clutch of death aside, for as he opened his eyes the hut was filled with stern, determined men, and there was Ben Jones bounding toward him, leaping over the prostrate body of Mr. Jack McElpatrick as he came.

"Harry! Harry!" he was shouting. "Hooray! We've won!"

"Oh, Ben!"

That was all Harry said, for no sooner had he said it than he fell fainting into the arms of his faithful friend.

* * * * *

Boom! Boom! Boom! What was this? More of Peter Edwards' crazy work! Again a fearful explosion, coming in three distinct shocks, burst upon those within the haunted hut. The earth seemed about to give way beneath their feet.

"Slide out of this, boys! Slide out, quick! Never mind them fellers!" roared Jess Weeks.

Five minutes only had elapsed since the Vigilantes burst in upon the scene, and Harry had but just recovered from his swoon. It was Ben's luck that brought the crisis, for as that luck would have it, Ben ran right into Jess Weeks and the Vigilantes just coming up the hill from Rocky Gulch. And now they went down the hill again faster than they had come, for an ominous trembling beneath their feet warned old Jess that something had been seriously undermined. Ben helped Harry, and Jess Weeks carried Lena, while the Vigilantes dragged along the mayor.

Jack McElpatrick, being dead, was left behind, and as for Old Rounds in the loft, no one ever thought of him, nor was the man ever seen again or his secrets disclosed.

"I believe the whole business is going to cave in!" exclaimed Jess Weeks, as they gained the gulch. "From what you tell me young man, I think——"

The sentence was never completed, for suddenly in the midst of it an awful crash was heard. When they looked again an awful change had taken place. The haunted hut had vanished from the hillside, rocks and trees, snow and soil all went tumbling in one confused mass down out of sight, leaving only a broken, ragged hole behind.

* * * * *

"It was the best you could do, boys," said Mr. McElpatrick. "I'm willing to admit that and to pay liberally for all your time and trouble. Of course, when I sent you out to Rocky Gulch I had no notion that my unfortunate son was at the bottom of the conspiracy against me, and as for your father, Harry, I want you to understand that I never wronged him in thought or deed."

That is what Mr. McElpatrick said about the business when the boys got back to Chicago at last and went to make their report. But what else could he say when we come to think of it? Still, Harry was inclined to believe that he spoke the truth and has never found reason to alter his opinion since. Certainly the trip to Rocky Gulch had been a failure so far as money was concerned, for by the great cave-in on the hill every entrance to the Western Queen was closed, even the little door by which Ben had gone in was afterward found to be blocked by a falling rock. So also with the water way. Never after did the creek flow through Black Buttes, and when the vigilantes tried to force their way into the cavern they found it hopelessly blocked. Some day no doubt the mine will be re-opened from above, but until that day comes no man will see the inside of the Western Queen, nor will the bones of those who perished inside its windings be brought to the light of day. And yet there is a way—there must be, for two years after an aged, white-haired man, whose face was scarred most horribly, walked into the store on the "west side," which Harry Edwards and Ben Jones had been able to open on their own account, with Mr. McElpatrick's aid. It was Peter Edwards, wasted and worn, but sane! Imagine Harry's amazement! Then, when Harry's amazement was over, great disclosures were naturally looked for, but none came. Mr. Edwards could remember nothing from the time the mayor of Black Buttes threw him down the shaft.

Meanwhile, old Mr. McElpatrick had died, so nothing could be done, nor has anything been done since. Harry's father lives with him today, an old and broken man. He can tell none of the secrets of the Western Queen. The vigilantes hung the Mayor of Black Buttes; Jack McElpatrick's body was never recovered, nor did a single person ever turn up who had worked in the mine. Lena, aided by old Mr. McElpatrick, went to Cincinnati and started a millinery store. The last we heard of her she was leading a quiet, respectable life, and in her business doing very well. Harry's wound never bothered him much. Neither Ben nor he are married yet, preferring to devote their whole time to a growing business.

Next week's issue will contain "DICK DASH-AWAY'S SCHOOL DAYS; or, THE BOY REBELS OF KINGAN COLLEGE."

CURRENT NEWS

CASEY'S PIPE KILLS FISH

Nick Martin, one of the seinemen at the Million Dollar Pier, Atlantic City, N. J., while helping to draw in the big net at the end of the season, lost his favorite pipe from his teeth as he leaned over the railing.

There was a swirl and a splash about the spot where the pipe hit the water inside the net. The husky netmen finished their haul and started to sort the hundreds of finny beauties in the troughs.

One seineman noticed a wide bulge at the gills of a big cod. When he picked the fish up he found Martin's "mickey," known as a "Casey's pipe," crosswise through the gills. The cod had either choked to death or been overcome the first time he hit the pipe. He was dead as a doornail.

TEST BATTERIES WITH A POTATO

If you are away from home and have to deal with a storage battery of which the polarity markings are obliterated, here is a simple test that will instantly reveal to you which is the positive and which the negative pole. It is given by Windsor Crowell in the Popular Science Monthly.

Get a fresh potato; cut a slice off one side, and stick the terminal wires into the cut section, about an inch apart. The potato in contact with one wire begins to turn green. This is the positive pole, therefore the other is the negative.

Suppose you have no potato handy to make the test, proceed as follows: Pour a little of the electrolytic solution from the battery into a glass, place both wires in it, well apart, and watch the bubbles rise from them. Many more will rise from the negative side than from the positive.

ADVENTURES OF A BANK NOTE

A lady passing down the Rue Richelieu had the misfortune to lose a pocketbook containing, among other valuables, a 1,000-franc note. The pocketbook was picked up by a chair-mender named Renaud, who lives at Montreaux; he placed it very carefully in his pocket and proceeded home. It is not often that a chair-mender has occasion to change a note for that amount, and Renaud, recognizing the impossibility of turning it into gold without detection, agreed with a friend to do the business for the consideration of 100 francs. This friend, Lucien Mathern, also a chair-mender, was in his turn filled with apprehension. The difficulty was solved with the aid of a horticulturist named Simonnet, who kindly consented to buy himself a horse for 300 francs and return the change. Renaud was thus richer by 600 francs. All might then have gone well if, two days later, it had not been discovered that the horse had been stolen from a dealer at Meaux. This led to the arrest of the trio, and later in the day the police put their hands on the horse thieves.

ARREST KEEPER OF "TRICK SALOON"

Revenue agents who have been operating in Brooklyn, N. Y., led Peter Muller of 1033 Gates avenue before United States Commissioner Hennessey the other day and reported him as owning the first trick saloon located. They declared, they entered his place, and, in spite of a spring board and several yards of string, devices alleged to have been prepared for the purpose of destroying evidence, they were able to accuse him of having sixteen glasses of whiskey and a three quart pitcher, also fully loaded.

Muller and his bartender, William F. Kreth, were held in \$1,000 bail for further examination.

The Muller bar, viewed from behind the scenes, the agents said, resembled nothing so much as a circus trapeze before it is sent aloft. They declared a pitcher of booze was balanced so that a slight tug on the string leading to the container's handle would send it crashing on the floor. The springboard, they explained, was in readiness to send sixteen glasses of whiskey into oblivion. Neither Muller nor the bartender had time to pull the string or jump on the board, it was stated.

ARTIST WIFE MADE COUNTERFEIT BILLS.

When Ormond Danais, employed in the Remington plant, Bridgeport, Conn., was arrested charged with circulating \$1 Federal reserve notes that had been carefully painted over to resemble \$10 and \$20 bills, his wife, Mary, a miniature painter, came forward and attempted to shoulder all the blame herself, even after her husband in his confession had sought to incriminate her.

She admitted that with the aid of high-grade inks and the most delicate of pens and brushes she had altered many notes. The chief excuse advanced by her and her husband was that they had four young children to support on his salary of \$23 a week.

The workmanship on the altered bills is said by the agents who have been trailing Danais for months past to have been remarkable. The first was passed last October, and the man, when questioned, said that he must have got it through a company from which he had borrowed. Since then he has been under surveillance day and night. The Secret Service men say that he passed another note at a Milford drug store, and still another at Mendel's drug store, in the Grand Central Terminal, New York City. They held off, however, until certain that he had no confederates.

Last week they arranged with the Remington Company to slip two marked \$1 bills into his pay envelope. One of these marked bills turned up as a \$10 note at the First Bridgeport National Bank, and Danais was then arrested. He was held in \$1,500 bail when arraigned before United States Commissioner Lavery lately. His wife was paroled in the custody of her attorney.

BOB, THE ICE KING

— OR —

OUT TO FIND THE POLE

By J. P. RICHARDS

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued)

Evidently Bob and Dr. Ike were now looking down into the crater of some ancient volcano.

The enclosure was circular, and surrounded with nearly perpendicular cliffs at every point, save the one where they now stood, where there was a gentle slope leading down to the bottom of this wonderful enclosure perhaps two hundred feet below where they were.

The distance across the crater was fully a mile. Its bottom was as flat as a floor, and away over towards the middle they could see a rude hut similar to Lars Larsen's, where they had passed the night.

Smoke was curling out of a stove-pipe chimney, and they could see dogs running about, but there was no other trace of human occupation than the smoke, which was quite enough.

"Well, there you are, doc!" cried Bob. "That's where Thyra and the others have been taken, surest thing, and Lars Larsen is the man responsible for it, of course. There is but one thing to do, and that is to go right ahead. If Thyra is to be held a prisoner I want to be one, too."

"Nonsense!" cried Ike. "You're in love, Bobby, and you speak like a lover, and consequently like a fool."

"Thank you."

"For nothing! What we want to do is to rescue our people, not to put ourselves in a situation where we can't do the first thing to help them out of their trouble. Show me your glass."

"I was just about to have a look myself, but as you spoke first you shall have it first," said Bob, and he produced the glass.

Ike took his time. It was nearly ten minutes before he handed it back again.

Meanwhile a man came out of the hut and went into the rude shed behind, returning inside the hut after a minute.

All that Bob could make out was that the man was unusually tall, and wore a fur suit like his own.

"You saw him?" he cried.

"Sure," replied Ike, "and I think he is Lars Larsen, who has been described to me as an unusually tall man."

After the man disappeared Ike swept the entire interior of the old crater with his glass, studied the descending trail for a few minutes, and then handed the glass back to Bob.

"Nothing doing, dear boy," he said. "That man is as secure from an attack by us as though he was in a steel fortress."

"What can you mean?" demanded Bob. "What's to hinder us from going right down there?"

The doctor pointed to the trail.

"See that dark streak about half way down?" he asked.

"Sure," said Bob. "What about that?"

"Look and see for yourself. You think it is an outcropping of the rock from the snow, but it isn't."

"A wide break," exclaimed Bob, turning the glass in that direction.

"Nothing else."

"I can see it distinctly."

"Do you see the boards lying on the trail beyond?"

"Yes. A bridge."

"Exactly—which they have pulled over on their side."

"Let us get down to it and see if it is possible to cross."

"As well that as anything," replied Ike, gloomily. "Give me the glass, Bobby. I want to keep a lookout as I go along."

"For that other person?" demanded Bob.

"Why, yes," replied Ike quietly, "for that other person, as you say."

They hurried down the slope, Ike turning his glass upon the hut from time to time.

"Warmer in here," observed Bob, after a minute.

"Yes, much warmer. An ideal place for an Arctic camp."

"There must be some other way of getting in than this?"

"I think so. On the other side of this range. Larsen can probably come and go to this other hut without touching our channel. I should say there can be no doubt of that."

They kept on down the slope, and reached the break.

It was a deep crevasse fully ten feet wide. Looking down they could see no bottom. Lying on the trail on the opposite side was a rude platform made of box covers lashed together. This thrown across the break would be plenty strong enough to permit a loaded dog-sled to pass.

"There you are," said Ike. "Now we know the whole story. Thyra is in that hut, of course. Something has to be done, but there is nothing doing here."

They stood gazing off at the hut when suddenly the door opened, and two persons came out.

One was the tall man, the other a smaller figure.

"Thyra! Sandy! Which? Ike, give me the glass quick!" cried Bob.

But Ike was already using it.

"Thyra, all right!" he exclaimed. "Well, upon my word!"

The man suddenly took the smaller figure in his arms.

They could see him kiss her.

She seemed to struggle to disengage herself, and with some difficulty succeeded.

Then they stood talking.

Once the tall man shook his gloved hand threateningly, as if he would strike Thyra, but he lowered it again.

After a few moments they walked around the hut and disappeared.

These were moments of agony for Bob.

Ike turned on him.

(To be continued)

GOOD READING

\$250,000 BIKE TRACK FOR NEW YORK FANS

A million-dollar company, backed by New York business men, will erect an open-air stadium in New York City for professional and amateur athletics. Bicycle racing will be the foundation of the venture. A site has been obtained on upper Manhattan Island on the line of the Broadway subway and work on the structure is to begin immediately, and rushed. Plans have been filed and contracts let for the building of the grand stand, which is to have a seating capacity of 20,000. The plant will be known as the New York Velodrome and will cost in the neighborhood of \$250,000. A six-lap bike track will be installed.

KIDNAPPED LAD PUT INTO DEEP WELL HOLE

After being kidnapped, dragged into a field, hit on the head with a hammer and thrown into a ditch, Willie Trimble, seven-year-old son of Marcus Trimble, railroad man of Danville, Ky., staggered into his home the other morning, told his story, collapsed, and became unconscious.

The boy was stolen from almost in front of his home last night while on an errand. He said he had been seized by a negro and a white man. His father declares that personal enmity against himself caused the abduction, but there is no clue to the identity of the kidnappers. A posse is searching the Danville section.

This is the second kidnapping in Central Kentucky in three weeks. Paul Little, eleven, son of a millionaire here, was kidnapped three weeks ago and held prisoner three days in the Phoenix Hotel. His abductors are at large, although a \$3,500 reward still holds.

The Trimble lad remembers having been placed in a deep well hole a quarter of a mile behind his home. There he lost consciousness.

When he revived he was in an old barn a short distance away. His skull was fractured by the hammer blow.

WIND CAVE, NATIONAL PARK

Interest has been aroused recently in scientific circles here over the huge subterranean wind cave in the southern part of Custer County, S. D.

The cave is twelve miles southeast of the town of Custer, and is a large cavern possessing wonders of surpassing interest. An investigation made by two experts of the Geological Survey developed many miles of galleries, branches and reticulating along the joined planes of carbonaceous limestone, and numerous chambers, with stalactite and stalagmite formations, some of notable beauty, and much unique "box-work" of thin intersecting veins of carbonate of lime projecting from the walls and ceilings. It attracts a large number of visitors. A fee of \$1 is charged for admission to and guidance through the cave. The formation indicates that the cave may extend one mile east, one mile north and from two to two and one-half miles south and west. There are numerous

crevices leading away from different routes, and one is crossed by a bridge called Castle Garden crevice, through which the chamber called the Blue Grotto is reached. At present the three principal alleys in the cave are known as the Pearly Gates, Fair Grounds and Garden of Eden. One explorer was known to have crawled through one of these crevices in a southwesterly direction for sixty hours.

In further describing the cave ore geologist said it was one of the greatest wonders of the world, in which startling discoveries will be made by future explorations. It has been likened to an oval piece of sponge several miles in length, depth and breadth, with caverns big enough to inclose the Congressional Library, and artistically decorated with ferns, grasses and studded with glistening crystals of the same formation. Tourists declare that the geysers of the Wind Cave surpass those of Yellowstone Park, and that the attractiveness of the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky does not compare with it. Edward C. Horn, Ph. D., who made somewhat of a study of the Wind Cave, says that there are three thousand chambers and one hundred miles of passages. The two most picturesque chambers, the Garden of Eden, and the Blue Grotto, cannot be reached by survey. It is in these places that the frost work, as delicate as dandelion blossoms, abounds most. The box-work crystallization of lime and gypsum, formed by the action of hot water, representing geometrical figures, is the feature of the chamber known as the Postoffice. The character of the roofs of most of the chambers, as it is in this room, is boxwood. It varies from white to dark blue in color. There is only one place where a few stalagmites are found, showing that no water percolates within the cave. It is practically dry throughout the portion explored. Among more rare specimens there still can be found some geodes. Among more notable attractions of the cave may be mentioned the "cave chimes," thin projections of crystallized lime and gypsum from the walls, emitting musical sounds under a gentle blow from a stick, which remind one of the Swiss bell ringers, and the Giant's Coffin, in a ravine some fifty to seventy-five feet below the traveler's path.

So far no traces of animal or vegetable life have been found in the cave except the intruders of a recent day, the mouse and a small fly, which occasionally can be seen the year round. The only traces of mineral are iron stain on the general formation of the cave, limestone and gypsum.

The town of Hot Springs, nestled among red crags of gypsum, on Fall Creek, twelve miles south of the Wind Cave, and the beautiful panorama through which one passes while driving over the splendid natural road from Hot Springs to the cave are among the surrounding attractions. A park embracing the whole, improved and beautified, with electrical devices within the cave, would make it a park of marvels.

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

MONKEY PRANKS

Whether the monkey really needed glasses or the attention of an oculist, or whether he thought he could eat specks, will never be known, but there is one thing John Page of Garland does know, and that is he is out \$20 he paid for glasses a short time ago, and all because a monkey in the zoo, decided it would like to have them.

Page was inspecting the simian exhibit rather closely. In fact, he had his face against the cage. While he was watching one monkey cut some capers, another snatched the glasses from his face. The monkey tried to fit them on its own nose. They did not suit—probably the vision was wrong.

Then the monkey tried to eat them. When its teeth failed to masticate the glass and gold the animal slammed them on the concrete floor of the cage and shattered them into a thousand pieces. It then twisted the frame to pieces, before the keeper came.

PIGEONS USED IN FIGHTING WESTERN FOREST FIRES

During the recent severe forest fires in certain sections of the West, carrier pigeons were successfully employed to convey messages from the fire-fighters "at the front" to headquarters, says American Forestry. The test of the birds for this use was on a limited scale, but has encouraged the Forest Service officials to believe a larger scale.

The experiment lends special interest to a plan which is being considered for co-operation between the Department of Agriculture and the Navy Department, under which carrier pigeons and equipment of the latter department may become available. To establish a successful carrier pigeon system it will be necessary to lay plans during the coming winter, to have the posts properly located and get the birds acclimated and begin their training. Flights of 600 miles in a single day have been made, while a distance of 140 to 200 miles means a two or three hour flight for the average bird. Since the distances which would be covered in Forest Service work are considerably less than this there appears to be no difficulty in this regard. In most instances the flights from fire-fighting areas to headquarters would be considerably less than fifty miles. The value of the birds would be particularly great in mountainous regions where travel is difficult.

PIGEONS SNARED BY THOUSANDS

The pioneers of Michigan and other States of the Great Lakes recall sadly the days when wild pigeons were so plentiful in this region that they were killed by men with clubs as they swept in great flocks over the sand hills. In many of the pioneer localities twenty-one meals of wild pigeon a week were not unusual, and much of the great State of Michigan was hewed out of the forest on a pigeon diet. A party

would often go into the hills and kill thousands of the birds without a gun, slaughtering thousands only to waste them.

After the first railroads were built, the pigeon crop of several Michigan counties was worth more than their wheat crop. Few people of today realize or can imagine the magnitude of these mighty nestings of the birds. A pigeon nesting would often extend for many miles north, east, south and west. Hundreds of nests would adorn every tree and the noise from the homecoming and departing birds would be so great that it was often impossible to carry on an ordinary conversation in the woods. Pigeon catching and killing became an industry. Carload after carload was shipped to New York and Eastern cities and dead pigeons were often piled up until they appeared like small hay stacks.

Trappers from all parts of the country journeyed to the Michigan eldorado for the purpose of catching the birds. They did it, when a large catch was desired, with a net, 16 to 18 feet wide and 30 to 40 feet long. This was arranged with ropes and spring poles, so that when a number of the birds had alighted in the particular spot to which they had been lured by means of the stool-pigeon, the spring poles were released and the net pulled over the spot where the birds had settled, covering the whole number.

Few people who see the expression "stool-pigeon" realize how closely its commonly accepted meaning follows the truth. After the spring poles had been bent back and the net covered with light grass so it would not be visible to the birds, a wild pigeon which had been kept alive to act as stool-pigeon was brought into service.

A leather string was put with a half tie about each leg of the bird. Then with a small cambric needle a white silk thread was passed through the pigeon's eyelid on each side of the head, the ends of the thread were twisted together on top of the bird's head and the pigeon was blindfolded for use. The bird was held by the boots, as the strings were called, and set on the forefinger. It was raised up, and then the hand brought down quickly to see whether the bird would hover properly. When one was found that would suit, it was fastened by the boots to a pad about as large as the hand near the centre of the bed to which the birds in trees within sight were attracted to the bed, which had been scattered with wheat or buckwheat. When the bed had become filled with pigeons the spring pole was pulled and the net carried over, there being sufficient spring in the poles to spread it fully.

Most trappers bit the birds' necks to kill them. used a pair of pincers for the same purpose. It was not uncommon to take from 500 to 1,000 birds at a single haul, and the sport, with a good stool-pigeon, was considered enchanting.

The greatest enemy of the pigeon trapper was the hawk, which often caught and killed his favorite stool-pigeon, just when it was most needed.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES.

FRENCH ARMY MAY NUMBER 700,000 MEN.

An army of 700,000 men must be maintained by France until enemy countries "show their good will by executing the terms of their treaties," in the opinion of government officials, says an Associated Press dispatch from Paris. Plans in contemplation call for 50,000 conscripts constantly under training, eighteen months' service being required of each man. Enlisted men and conscripts will receive pay equal to the wages earned by industrial workers, less the cost of food and lodging provided by the government. It is expected that a bill to carry out this program will be introduced in the Chamber in June next.

AKRON GAINS 139,368.

With an increase of 139,368 in its population during the last decade, Akron, Ohio, with a 1920 census population of 208,435 has gone ahead of Kansas City, Kan., Dayton, Memphis, Nashville, Syracuse and Albany. Akron's total increase was the largest in number thus far reported in the fourteenth census.

Ranking as the eighty-first city in 1910, Akron's rate of growth in the last ten years was 201.8 per cent., which places it now just below St. Paul, which is the next largest city having reported this year, with 234,595.

Wichita, Kan., with a 1920 census of 72,128, shows an increase of 19,678 or 37.5 per cent.

VAST FORTIFICATIONS OF METZ.

An article by Colonel E. M. Blake, C. A., in the Journal of the United States Artillery, speaking of the modern Metz fortifications, says that the turrets containing the Krupp guns can be manned and supplied without ever exposing a man, as all batteries are connected with other works of the "Feste" by deep subterranean galleries. Miles of these galleries have been cut, with a cross section and grade to allow men to circulate rapidly when needed, and one finds complete kitchen, bakeries, bathing and toilet rooms for the garrison, large recreation rooms, electric lighting and power, and a complete system of forced draft ventilation.

SNUFFING OUT A GAS WELL.

The largest recorded gas blaze was at Taft, Cal., last July, where the well blazed for ten days and nights, 180,000,000 cubic feet of gas being consumed every twenty-four hours. The last of six attempts to extinguish the blaze by ordinary methods made use of twenty-one 3-inch lines and nine 4-inch lines, through which twenty boilers and eleven rotary pumps threw steam, water, mud and carbon tetrachloride into the well. The use of field howitzers was also considered, but the available artillery was too small to accomplish the task. Finally it was decided to use explosives, which were conveyed in a large package covered with heavy sheets of asbestos and with an electric primer over the well between two derricks erected at safe distances for the purpose. When the proper spot was reached, the explosives

were set off electrically and the gas-well fire was divided into three sections. The section at the point of explosion was moved away from the column in a horizontal direction, the upper section was blown upward and beyond danger of ignition of the gas column, while the lower section was snuffed out just like a candle.

FISHING WITH HANDS

It is hard to believe that human beings can become expert enough at swimming and diving to be able to catch fish in their watery home; yet it is so.

The native Hawaiians are the ones who do it, and it is a common sight in the districts that are not densely populated to see men, women and children engaged in thus catching fish, shrimp and crabs.

Sometimes they crouch in shallow water and feel around the coral and lava bottom for the creatures. So skillful have they become by practice that even the swiftest fish rarely escape. They can seize a crab and jerk him out of his rocky lair before he can use his claws.

The Hawaiians are assisted in this mode of fishing by the fact that many species of Pacific Ocean fish hide themselves in clefts in the rocks and lie there when danger threatens.

This habit is utilized by the men and boys to catch those fish which live in deep water. They tie a bag around their waists and dive straight down to the bottom. There they hold fast to a rock with one hand, to keep themselves on bottom, and with the other feel and grope in the crevices or under the overhanging rock ledges, till they get their hands around a fish. Then they put him into the bag and grope for another one until they have to ascend for air.

A daring kind of fishing is that for the octopus. The Hawaiian dives to the bottom and pokes a stick into crevices and holes in which the octopus loves to hide. When the stick touches one of the ugly things it invariably takes hold so tightly with its tentacles that it can be dragged forth. The moment the fisherman has thus hauled it out, he lets himself ascend. He goes up so fast that he reaches the surface before the angry and stubborn devil-fish has made up his mind to let go its hold on the stick. When he reaches the surface the Hawaiian grabs the octopus and instantly bites deep into its head, thus killing the brute at once.

Another rather daring form of fishing is that for the ula, a species of lobster. When the fisherman is ready to go down for this creature, he wraps his right hand in a long piece of cloth. Then he dives and feels around with his bandaged hand until he finds the ula. Frequently he will work so fast that he will bring up two or three ulas from one dive.

Now and then the fisherman finds a puhi in a hole instead of an ula. Then the bandage does not save him from being badly bitten, for the puhi is a great sea eel of immense strength and with jaws set with immensely sharp teeth.

The Midnight Shadow

— OR —

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN STEPS

By WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XVIII.—(continued)

"What is it?" demanded Oliver.

"Simply the old man's will," replied Dick Ketchum. "It leaves his half-brother, Francis Debevoise, a lot of gilt-edged New York real estate, but it leaves the business and all the stock to a young man of my acquaintance."

"Not to me?" cried Oliver.

"Even so," replied Dick. "You are the identical man."

What the Italian told Dick Ketchum was true. That was afterwards proved.

The dandelion digger actually did drive Henry Grady, Arthur and Fanny in a covered wagon from the old Debevoise house to Brown's coal docks, where they went aboard a rowboat.

But of all this Fanny had no recollection.

For, from the time when Henry Grady faded away from her vision after he had administered the drug, until she woke up in that boat, Fanny knew nothing.

As the dandelion-digger put it, the poor girl had indeed been badly doped.

But the drug relinquished its hold at last, and Fanny came back to consciousness to find herself seated astern in a large rowboat with Henry Grady facing her, pulling laboriously at a pair of oars.

In the bow was the Shadow, dressed in his robe, and wearing the soft black felt hat.

His eyes were closed, and he looked like a man asleep.

Fanny stared about, unable to comprehend for the moment where she was or what it all meant.

It was like waking out of a disagreeable dream, but this time Fanny could not remember her dream.

She shifted her position slightly, and this drew Henry Grady's attention to her.

It was not a particularly dark night, but still it was dark enough, and the old man leaned forward to get a better view of her face.

"I see," he said, speaking in the mild tone in which he had at first addressed her, "you have come out of it. I am glad. I was afraid you never would."

"Oh, Mr. Grady!" gasped Fanny. "How could you use me so? Where are we? What are you going to do with me now?"

"My dear young lady, I am going to surprise you first of all," he replied. "I don't know where we are or how we all came to be in this boat."

"What can you mean, sir?"

"Your mind is evidently dazed through the effects of the drug which I presume, I administered to you while one of my spells was upon me. Have you forgotten what I told you about myself?"

"That—that you are crazy at times?"

"Yes."

"I remember."

"Then let me tell you that the last spell which came upon me has remained on me till ten minutes or so ago, when I came to myself in this boat, as you see me now. Believe me or not, Miss Fanny, I have no more idea where I am or why I am here than you have."

"Mr. Grady, you are deceiving me. Surely it cannot be as you say!"

"No, I am not. It is just as I tell you. Have pity on an unfortunate man."

"Do you take that same drug which you gave me?"

Henry Grady nodded.

"And that accounts for your condition?"

"Yes, in part."

"What is it?"

"That I will never tell you. Ask me no more questions of that kind."

"But why don't you pull ashore?"

"Miss Fanny, listen. While you have no memory of what happened to you after I gave you the drug, it is not so with me, owing to the quantity of the stuff I have taken now for several years. In a general way I remember. I have long wanted to get away from that place, but for certain reasons I could not bring myself to make the move. Now I feel assured that during one of my spells, as we will still call my condition when I am my other self, that I have made arrangements for this move. Had the effects of the drug endured I should have pulled this boat straight to the place which I intended to go, where I have no doubt I should have found everything arranged for my reception. I am now pulling about idly, waiting for the spell to return. But where is the use. I may as well ship my oars and spare my exertions while I am talking to you."

"Fanny shuddered to think what might be her fate when the 'spell' did return.

"Have—have you taken another dose?" she faltered.

"I have," replied Henry Grady, pulling in his oars. "It won't be long now before it takes hold. It takes time with me."

He turned and looked at Arthur.

"The poor boy is asleep," he said. "I wonder how much he knows of all this? He sleeps much of his time, but not so much at night. Then he usually watches me. Singular business, isn't it, Miss Fanny? Just wait till we get where we are going. Then I shall take immediate steps to set you free."

Fanny was silent. The situation was altogether too much for her. She did not know what to say or do.

She now perceived that there were two heavy grips in the boat, and a new dress-suit case.

She wondered what they contained, and, truth to tell, she found it very hard to believe that Henry Grady was sincere in what he had said.

Altogether the situation looked very black.

The moments passed.

Occasionally the old jewelry peddler made some casual remark, to which Fanny would respond in a dreamy way.

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

BURNING BOY AT STAKE.

That they were "only playing" was the defense given by Darrel Pool, aged eleven, and Kenneth Baker, eleven, when they were arraigned in the Juvenile Court, Lancaster, O., April 17, charged with attempting to burn Charles Kneller, aged ten, a newsboy, at the stake early this week. They said they thought the Kneller boy would be able to stamp out the flames with his feet when they left him.

Both boys were found delinquent by Judge Acton. Baker was put on probation and Pool released. Kneller was badly burned when the two boys tied him to a stake and built a fire about him. He will recover.

MICE ATE RECORDS

One of the newest pleas received by Walter Edwards, Chief of the Income Tax Department, St. Louis, Mo., for an extension of time by a corporation in filing the Federal income tax returns came in the other day from an Osage County corporation, whose officers stated they could not file an exact return of its 1919 business because the mice had eaten up the records of the company.

In an effort to substantiate the claim of the company, the local Osage County Deputy Collector examined the records of the company and send word to the St. Louis office that the claim was true, that "the mice had got it." The extension was granted.

GIRL SHORN OF RINGS.

Miss Edith Taylor of No. 1022 Bella Vista Avenue, Oakland, Cal., feels herself the possessor of an unusual luck that lurks in two rings, one of them a diamond engagement ring, both of which were stripped from her fingers at night by a burglar who entered the room.

She was awakened by the burglar, but feared to make an outcry. The intruder, with the aid of a flashlight, saw the diamond ring and a ruby ring sparkling on the girl's fingers, and forthwith proceeded to take them off.

After getting both rings the man walked downstairs and began to help himself to the family plate.

Miss Taylor called her father, M. P. Taylor, and together they rushed the burglar, who fled, leaving the silver and dropping both rings in the hall.

A "WIFE-CATCHER"

As is customary with Indians the world over, the Caribs are expert basket weavers, and many strong and handsome baskets are to be bought in Roseau at reasonable prices if one finds the right shops. A peculiar instrument, made of basket straw and woven closely together so as to form a hollow tube, ending in strong twisted ends, and commonly dubbed a "wife catcher," is also made and sold by the Caribs. By slipping the hollow end over a man's finger above the joint and pulling on the twisted end, the catcher will tighten around the finger and the captive

will be unable to release his hand. It is claimed that the Indians formerly employed this device as a handcuff for prisoners, using several for each hand, and leading the captives by the fingers. Few tourists are permitted to leave Roseau without a wife catcher, for which a sixpence is willingly exchanged.

SCORNS SHOTGUN

Gus Smith, an expert archer of Eden, Wis., scorns shotguns when he goes hunting. He goes armed only with his bow and arrows.

He was tramping through the woods near his home when his quiver caught on a bush, but he thought little of it and did not believe that his arrows were damaged. Soon, in an open field, he made a hasty selection of an arrow and shot it at a partridge on the wing, only a short distance away. He noticed the arrow describing a wide curve, but the partridge made a quick turn and was knocked down. The arrow, however, had only struck a glancing blow and kept going. It described a wide circle, coming back to the place where Smith stood, the same as a boomerang, and killed a rabbit which had jumped up just behind Smith.

Smith picked up the rabbit and ran to where the stunned partridge lay, catching it before it recovered. Examination showed that the feathers on the arrow had been knocked askew when his quiver struck the bush and that they had made a rudder which carried it in the circle.

DEATH VALLEY AT PRESENT

Death Valley, once the terror of the traveler in the Southwest and the last resting place of many prospectors, is being made safe for travel both day and night.

This erstwhile barrier to human progress has been conquered by the automobile. Its trackless waste of sand has been signposted and its hidden waterholes marked by Uncle Sam. Not content merely with making the desert easy to cross for travelers in daylight, the Automobile Club of Southern California is going further and in placing signs in such manner that the rays of headlights from passing machines will fall upon them and guide the night tourist as safely and surely as the day traveler.

The club also will signpost all lateral routes of the famous Death Valley district. Included in the signposting being done will be a complete set of road signs directing tourists to picturesque Palm Canyon, on the edge of the desert—one of the unique spots of the world. This oasis in the sandy wastes is to be made a national monument by the government. Its distinctive feature is the presence of ancient palms of weird beauty, standing in straight rows, apparently planted by the hand of man but antedating the history of the first human beings in this section.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, MAY 12, 1920.

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

James A. (Coke) Jones is the original hard fuck man in Greensburg, Ind. Recently he fell when at work in a cigar store and dislocated his left shoulder for the eleventh time in two years. Jones is a veteran of the World War and during his service the shoulder was out of place three times. The first injury was received in an indoor baseball game of the Y. M. C. A.

Discovery by a road construction crew of gigantic bones of an animal believed to be a mastodon, near Perawawa, on the Snake River, lately was reported at Spokane, Wash., by Rev. M. W. Fink of Penawawa. He said the skull was two and one-half feet in width between the eyesockets, the tusks were eight inches in diameter at the base and the teeth four to five inches across. It is expected that an effort to excavate the entire skeleton will be made.

LAUGHS

"Baby sleeps all day and howls all night."
"Why not take him to Norway, where it's always daytime from May to October?"

"I hear Henpecked has died and left no will."
"Well, the poor chap was never allowed to have any will of his own when he was alive."

"When you called the boss down, I suppose you were fired with a spirit of independence?" "Not a bit of it. I was fired by the boss."

Hoax—There goes a fellow who believes in taking things as they come. Joax—Who is he—a philosopher? Hoax—No; a photographer.

"Poor Jack! He never could spell, and it ruined him." "How?" "He wrote a verse to an heiress he was in love with, and he wrote boney for bonny."

Flanagan—Hivins, man! Phwat's the matther wid yer face? Hanagan—Faith, 'twas an accident. The ould woman throwed a plate at me. Flanagan—An' d'ye call that an accident? Hanagan—Av coorse! Didn't she hit phwat she aimed at?

Hair Grew on Bald Head

After being almost totally bald, a New Yorker happily found something which brought out a new, luxuriant growth of hair of which he is so proud that he will send the information free to anyone who asks for it. Write: John H. Brittain, BK-103, Station F, New York, N. Y. Many women and men, by using this information, have grown hair after all else failed. Cut this out, show others; this is genuine.



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PLUCK AND LUCK

FROM ALL POINTS

LICENSE TAGS FOR CATS.

Under an ordinance which has been proposed by the Butte County Humane Society cats of Chico, Cal., face a curtailment of their customary freedom. The ordinance would require cats to wear license tags, and owners would be held responsible for midnight prowlings. It also provides that all cats found roaming around at night be placed in the pound.

CRAZED BRONCO KILLS BOY

Edward J. Heater, nine years old, was dragged through the streets of Matamoras, Pa., and over the State road more than four miles to his death recently by a bronco. The boy had the animal in a lot near his home, where it was eating grass, and was holding it by a halter when the halter snapped fast, entangling the boy, who was trampled to death by the frightened animal. Citizens and several automobiles gave chase and cornered the pony after an hour's run, which involved the smash-up of one of the cars. The boy's head was crushed and many bones broken. His parents witnessed the tragedy.

FARMER SAVES AIRMAN

J. T. Murphy, who came to Bellefonte, Pa., from Cleveland several days ago to pilot an airplane over the aerial mail route, was seriously injured when his machine went into a tail spin and fell a distance of 400 feet. As the machine struck the ground the gas tank exploded and burst into flames. The aviator was saved from being burned to death by Boyd Sampsel, a farmer, who cut the straps holding Murphy and pulled him out of the burning machine. Sampsel was also painfully burned.

A STRANGE TRAGEDY

The discovery on the Yacht Ostara, stranded at Sulinaon, one of the mouths of Danube, of the dead bodies of eleven noted Russian men and women, each shot through the head, and not a living soul on board, has presented the Rumanian authorities with one of the most mysterious tragedies of Bolshevism in the Black Sea. The bodies have been identified as those of members of the noted Russian families of Falzfein and Skadowki.

The discovery was made by soldiers, who, when they went aboard the helpless yacht, found the cabin half filled with water and the eleven bodies floating around. On board the yacht were 14,000,000 rubles in gold and paper and jewels.

The elder Falzfein still grasped a pistol in his hand when his body was found, and whether the party committed suicide or were murdered is a question that remains unanswered.

An investigation is being made by the Rumanian authorities, aided by Russian friends of the two families. All that is known is that the two families fled their estates to Odessa, and when the Bolsheviks arrived there in February

put their belongings on board the Ostara, which was then towed by a Russian steamship bound for Constanza. The tow ropes broke several times, owing to severe storms, and finally the yacht lost the steamer altogether and proceeded to Constanza.

The refugees were refused permission to land. It is believed, as a result of the investigation so far made, that after the yacht lost its tow it drifted at the mercy of the storm, and the refugees, six men and five women became exhausted from the cold waves breaking over the vessel and lack of food. Unable to manage the yacht the party made a despairing effort to put her ashore on the desolate beach near Sulina. There they succeeded in launching small boats, but Rumanian guards, under strict orders to permit no landing through fear of the Bolsheviks, ordered them to return to the vessel.

It appears that some coast fishermen offered a rescue when the vessel began settling, owing to the pounding of the heavy seas, but soldiers prevented. How the families met their death probably never will be known. Some money and valuables the refugees had on board were missing when the valuables the refugees had on board were checked up, and Rumania has been asked to attempt to recover them.

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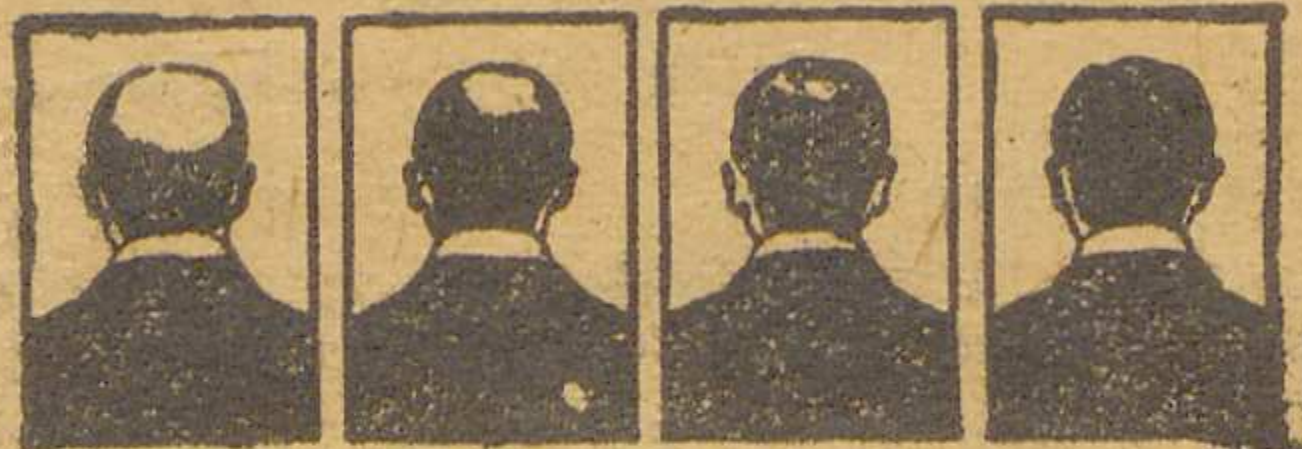
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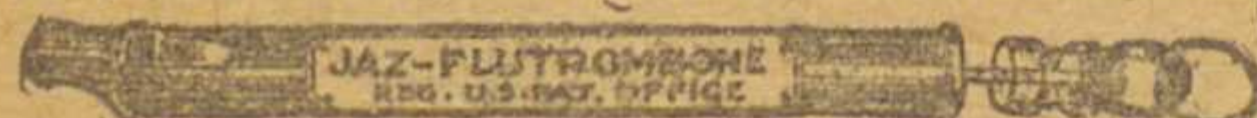


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